

# Conviction -- Conversion and Call to the Ministry

by Martin Knapp

---

*The sermon emphasizes the journey from conviction to conversion and the subsequent call to ministry, highlighting the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, John 3:3, Romans 8:14, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Conversion", "Gods Calling"

---

## Description

Martin Knapp preaches about the journey of Mr. Weber, a member of the Romish Church who was not converted during his childhood and youth. Despite being in the Roman Catholic Church, Mr. Weber's spiritual awakening and conversion journey reflect the struggles and triumphs of many church members in Protestantism as well. Through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, Mr. Weber's transformation from a life of dissipation and doom to a life of faith and salvation showcases the power of God's grace and mercy. His story emphasizes the importance of seeking true conversion and surrendering to God's calling, even in the face of challenges and opposition.

---

## Transcript

A member of the Romish Church, but not converted. Such was the experience of Mr. Weber during all the days of his childhood and youth. When conscience would speak to alarm him, Satan would give the cradle of Catholicism, in which he had been placed, a nudge, and soon he would be fast asleep again.

Were such scenes confined only to the Roman Church, it would be a sad enough picture; but it is a startling fact that the churches of Protestantism are likewise replete with such members. As Mr. Moody says, "Many are as ignorant of spirituality as Nicodemus was of the new birth." The writer a few months since asked Mr. Weber, in the light of all of his experience as an evangelist, the proportion of people in the churches of Protestantism that in his judgment are really converted. He answered, "If I should say but one in four, I would not be putting it strongly."

In the spiritual tornadoes that are sweeping over the land, thank God thousands of these are being convicted, and we trust converted. Otherwise they remain drones in the gospel hive, that hinder, instead of help, -- worms in the gospel tree that sap its very life.

Reader, are you, as he was then, a church member but still unsaved? If so, may you, too, be led to see your error and danger and seek the grace that giveth life.

The chief agent as in all other cases -- that led to Joseph's conviction, was the Holy Ghost. He used, among other things, especially his mother's warning. When he was about nineteen years of age his relish for wickedness was such that "his mother became alarmed and threatened to send him to the Reform School" if he joined a show company. This was the first thing that seemed in anyway to have checked him as he was plunging madly down the abyss of dissipation and of doom. This evidently "set him to thinking" about his real condition and prospects of the future.

The Roman Catholic Church holds clearly the atonement through Jesus, and the reality of future reward and punishment; also a hell just as awful as Christ has pictured it.

These truths had been vividly put before him by the teachings of the priest and as illustrated by the many impressive paintings that adorned the walls of the Roman cathedral.

Protestantism, while she shuns her errors, might learn much from Rome in her perseverance and success in impressing the minds of the young. The spirit of God now uses the truths which the boy's mind has "been like wax to receive and like marble to retain," though loth to practice, and he begins to feel that he is "guilty, helpless, lost, undone," and that he has a hell to shun and an offended God with whom he must make his peace at once. The life boat of Salvation was awaiting him, but Satan drew his eyes from that to another craft called Reformation, and he said, "I'll enter that, I'll reform and live a better life."

He vowed not to drink any more beer, and told his companions that he would give them five dollars if they caught him drinking it any more. He kept this vow, but continued to drink whiskey until the following March, when he became a total abstainer.

His associates plied all their arts to prevail upon him to give up these "new notions," but they might as well have pleaded with a whirlwind.

For four years he had been working with an ice company at Hamilton, Ohio, but May 6, 1874, he was apprenticed to Peter Hecks to learn the trade of carriage trimming. After working here for about half a year, while visiting the Cincinnati exposition, he saw an advertisement in the paper for one who had experience in carriage trimming, responded and secured the place. When his mother was first informed of this change she said, "You will surely be lost." Up to this time he had made his home with his parents, and his affectionate nature had twined around the parental household like the ivy around the oak.

No one knows the worth of a home, be it ever so humble, until he is called upon to leave it. Then some tendrils will break and bleed. The Holy Spirit used this occasion to touch the young man's heart for good as it had never been touched before. Under this strange, sweet, and to him melting influence, "as he was passing from the parental roof, his heart was touched with the parting. His better nature gained the supremacy. When almost out of view of his home and loved ones, he lifted his eyes toward heaven, and asked God to make him a better boy. That simple prayer was answered. From this time we find him different. God moves in a mysterious way. What seemed to his mother the ruin of her boy was his making. His old associates, especially those of the later day who had so much influence over him for evil, were now separated from him. It is true, the distance was not great, but the dire influence of constant evil companionship was broken, and an opportunity for better influences to operate was given."

If it be true that

"Satan trembles when he sees

The weakest saint upon his knees,"

then he doubtless began to tremble now lest this captive should escape.

Has he not used all that Satanic power can suggest to bind him fast? Can it be possible that this blindfolded prisoner is to pierce the thick pall of ignorance, vice and superstition, and even now behold that light that will turn the darkest night of sin into a day that knows no ending? So Satan soliloquizes. In the blackness, from the lips of the youth there wings a simple prayer to the ears of Him who ever listens to the faintest sigh of penitence, and has said, "Ask and ye shall receive." An answer comes, though not the one he expected, nor in the way he looked for. He is not pardoned yet, but he will be, cost what it may.

"Oh, where can rest be found,

Rest for the weary soul?"

He will seek it through the ordinances of the church of his fathers. Is not that the true church? So by the ladder of good deeds and devotions he will climb up into the peace and divine favor that is beginning to seem worth more to him than all else besides. So "he attended the Catholic Church faithfully in all kinds of weather. He would kneel upon the stone floor of the church and try to pray, but it seemed that he could not pray. The more he tried the worse he felt. No relief came to him, yet he would be faithful. He fought his appetites and passions the best he could with the light he possessed and the aid he could command. Thus he spent weary months seeking light, but there was no one to guide him aright. He had turned his face from the evil. He must win or die in the effort." How many like him must learn, as preached by Paul and learned by Luther as God fitted him for his life's great work, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," and that the "just shall live by faith."

Painfully was the lesson learned that

"Nor bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,

Nor hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest,

Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,

Can wash the dismal stain away."

His condition becomes desperate. Like Pharaoh, when Israel determined to fly for freedom, Satan marched down upon him with charging hosts of doubts and fears and strong temptations.

He worked early and late, and was soon rewarded by being made foreman, and being industrious he began to work in another shop at night. It was difficult to break from old companions, but now he saw that they were hindering him, and they must go.

God loved him too well to let him alone until he was saved and safe.

The Spirit continued to enlighten him and to strive with him. One morning he arose more restless and uneasy than usual. All of his old amusements had lost their charms. His soul was hungry for something

that would satisfy. He had sought in Rome's way -- in his own way, but still had found it not.

Unprepared for life, for death, for judgment and for eternity! what could he do? "His old associations crowded upon his mind, but were repelled. In this anxiety and temptation he wandered from place to place, but nowhere could he dissipate his heart's forebodings. He wandered across the 'Rhine,' into a variety theater, seeking rest, but finding none. In these places he did not yield to temptation. He had not the least idea that they were unfit for a seeker of religion's peace. He was educated to believe that these places were no worse than those of legitimate amusements, and that the Christian could enjoy the musical treat without any danger of sinning, or of injury to himself. He was uneasy, but had no idea of its cause or nature. He did not attribute it to the Spirit of God, but that Spirit was leading him in a way he knew not. After hours spent in this fruitless effort to find peace, he was attracted by a crowd of people listening to a Baptist missionary preaching on the site of the Exposition building under the archway crossing to the Art Gallery in Washington Park. The name of this minister was Rev. Joseph Emery. It was mere curiosity that led him to hear this man talk, for he was not aware that he was preaching the Gospel, or he probably would not have gone to hear the heretic. His preaching had no apparent effect upon him, but when the crowd began to sing lustily,

'Almost persuaded now to believe

Almost persuaded Christ to receive,'

he became more attentive. His soul responded to the song, and when the

last lines of the last stanza were being sung, --

"'Almost' cannot avail;

'Almost' is but to fail

Sad, sad, that bitter wail --

'Almost' -- but lost!'

his soul was peculiarly touched, and looking toward heaven he said vehemently within himself, 'I WILL NOT BE LOST; I WILL BE SAVED.' In the quickness of thought the burden was rolled away in this decision for heaven. His heart was made light and happy. He felt that he could fly.

What a change! and how suddenly it came upon him! He had never been taught in the way of life, and did not realize what the change was, but he knew he was happy."

Thus was Satan defeated, his chains broken, and the soul of Joseph set at liberty.

Christ did more for him "in the quickness of thought," than Roman rites in a life-time. From this day, Aug. 14, 1874, he dates his conversion. Henceforth, he will be known as the "Converted Catholic."

Among all of his wicked associates he is the only one that today is saved. Let that be remembered, lest some reader say, "Like Weber, I'll quaff the pleasures of sin's cup, and after that will make 'my peace with God."

Unlike many who resist the truth, "as soon as the way of salvation was made plain to him, he walked in it." His conversion was as marvelous as Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions, or the Hebrew children's from the fiery furnace.

His deliverance was from the jaws of the lions of habits and passions, which already were crushing his soul; from the fires of sins that nothing in the universe, except the blood of Jesus, could ever quench. For this deliverance let every reader give "glory to God in the highest!" What this new experience was, in his spiritual darkness he hardly understood, but was conscious of the long-sought, great and blessed change.

Having enlisted under his new Commander, with all the energy he had shown in the service of sin, he now begins to work with Him.

Not like some foolish persons who wait for "some great thing" did he tarry, but seized the first opportunities to do good. The Young Men's Christian Association, the Sunday School, and, above all, the Methodist class meeting, were places that he loved.

No man need be anxious about something to do for the Master after he has settled the question that he will cheerfully do anything that He may bid. Of all such "it is written," "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."

Mr. Weber proved the truth of this. The work first given him was such as was fitted to his undeveloped capacities.

God did not send Moses upon his great life-work until he had been disciplined by years of preparatory training. The same was true of the apostles, of Luther, Wesley, Moody, and all of those who have been greatly honored in God's work. Mr. Weber was glad to belong to this class, and ready for any discipline.

Now we come to his first public religious work. What was it? Teaching a set of rude, wild, street Arabs from the slums of Cincinnati. He did not feel "qualified," but was too loyal to a kingly voice, -- whose whispers now he loved to heed -- to say "no," and so with Bible and Journal he began his work. At first, of course, he made blunders. Who does not? Is not failure the first letter in the alphabet of success?

There was one thing he could do one thing of greatest moment, one thing of more value than the recital of the most elaborate, Scriptural disquisitions, or systematic, analytical explanations of the lesson; and that was the giving of his own, living, personal experience of the practical truths in it.

He was now in possession of something that for soul-saving work was of more value than archangel eloquence, "all knowledge," and all "gifts," as valuable as these may be, and this talent of a genuine Christian experience, he would use as God might lead. God set His seal early upon the labors of the young worker, and many who belonged to his class were converted.

Brother Weber and his early co-workers were evidently and fortunately free from that false refinement and spurious idea of religious dignity which would confine gospel-meetings between church walls, and abandon God's great temple with "curtains of azure and dome of blue" to the circus, medicine vender, political pedagogue, and the Salvation Army. Therefore, at their Master's command, after the Sunday School is over, they hasten to the "highways" and in the market places, and at their singing a crowd collects, and they unfold to them that gospel, which, like the sunshine and the free air of heaven, is at home in all places, and is for rich and poor alike. Though, like Jesus and the Wesleys in their outdoor work, they sometimes met with hisses and opposition, yet they continued it, and much good was done.

The influence and counsels of Mr. Thompson, the superintendent of the Elm Street Sunday School, were heaven-sent inspirations to him in this stage of his experience. Best of all, Jesus was his companion, the Word his instructor, and the Holy Spirit his guide.

The next great question that he had to settle was, "Where shall I make my church home?"

His quick perceptive powers saw clearly, to remain out on the "devils commons," with church membership nowhere, would be a perilous course. And then he had too much honor to try and "tramp it" without taking a regular church train.

As cattle turned loose the road browse through the fences a wisp of clover here and some wheat there and some timothy from another owner, so some people try to eke out a spiritual existence by what they in a like manner can browse from different churches, and sometimes they justify themselves in such a course by saying, "We don't want to be tied up to any one church; we want to be free."

The embryo evangelist with a divine instinct preferred the freedom of the "pasture" to that of the "roadside," and united with the St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, November 1, 1875, on probation, and came into full membership April 9, 1876.

Now Satan was more enraged than ever, and he so influenced Mr. Weber's employer, that he discharged him because he had turned Protestant. Trusting, praying, often severely tried, yet learning new lessons, nearly a year passed away, and now we come to the next great event in his life,

#### HIS CALL TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

He had been feeling ever since his conversion that he was called to preach the Gospel of Jesus, but he pleaded ignorance and the want of means to acquire an education as the excuse for his refusal. Amid all these discouragements, in debt for his board, with no work available, he knelt down in his room, alone with God. This was February 2, 1877. He had been raised as a Catholic, to believe in signs and wonders. While thus alone with his heavenly Father he poured out his soul unto God in this plaintive strain, 'Now, dear Father, I am not satisfied with thy Spirit saying, "You must preach;" I want something I can see and feel with my hands.' It seemed to him that the Lord replied, 'Well, my child, what shall I place before you?' He answered, A piece of money, Lord, in the space of one week." This hour of secret pleading and covenant was not forgotten. It was always before his mind. Ofttimes he would see a shining object before him, when he would approach it expectantly, only to find it a piece of tin or glass shining in the sunlight. His heart would then be sad, and misgivings would come to him. He felt that if God wanted him to preach he would give him the sign in the form of a piece of money. At times he would take the lamp at night to look around the room, or feel on the bed, searching every nook and corner, expecting the sign and evidence of his call to the ministry.

"The week was rapidly passing away. He went to his aunt's, who was living in Corryville, a suburb of Cincinnati, on Monday, February 5th. This aunt had become highly incensed on learning that he was out on the street preaching and had turned Protestant. She had sent for him on a previous occasion, and told him that he was crazy, and would go where all the crazy Methodists go, to the lunatic asylum, and that she did not want anything more to do with him, nor to see him afterward. After this interview he prayed for her, as he always did for all who persecuted him. She became reconciled to him, especially when she saw the power of the new religion over his life, so that she was prepared to welcome and encourage him in this trying hour. He opened his heart to his reconciled aunt, told her of all his trials, misgivings, his financial

difficulties, etc. Her heart was touched. She invited him to remain with her until he could find a job. He accepted the invitation. On the following Wednesday, Feb., 1887, he attended service at the Mt. Auburn Methodist Episcopal Church, where they had been holding a revival, and were now receiving the converts into probationary membership. This seems to have been a very excellent meeting. His soul was aglow with peace and joy.

"At the conclusion of the meeting he was talking with a young man who had been converted, telling him of his own experience and abiding hope in the Lord Jesus. While he was thus administering comfort and consolation to this new convert, he saw something sparkling on the floor, about twenty feet away. Then the vision dawned upon him: Here is the piece of money, the sign of his call to the ministry of the blessed Saviour. Ecstasy filled his soul; joy thrilled every chord of his heart; gladness reigned supreme. Turning his face toward heaven, his soul in its fullness exclaimed, 'Lord, I will go.' He picked up the shining objects, which proved to be two pennies, new from the mint. He gave them to the pastor, William W. Case. He had asked for a piece of money. God gave him two, -- the emblem of a double call, to the ministry and to evangelism. They were but pennies, the smallest pieces of money, in token that the kingdom of Christ does not consist of the riches of this world. They were new, bright pennies, displaying the glory of the mission of an ambassador of the Lord Jesus." On his way home the stars seemed to dance in participating joy; all nature was gorgeously arrayed in gladness to his happy soul. When he arrived at his aunt's, he told her about his prayer, the sign, and the answer. She said, "You ought to accept it." He replied, "I will." Then and there the question of his life work was settled. Thus step by step he was led by God into the great harvest field of soul-saving work. More and more he felt, the love of Christ doth me constrain, To seek the wandering souls of men; With cries, entreaties, tears, to save, to snatch them from the gaping grave."

In his call to the ministry we are struck with the young man's caution and his honesty. In view of the great responsibility, like all whom God calls to this great work, he at first recoils from the call. He must know it to be of God before he can accept and act on it. How can he know? He had not been instructed, as we are clearly taught, that if such an impression is of God it will be followed, --

1. By gifts for the work.
2. By the call of the church.
3. By open doors for work, or preparation for it.

As he was ignorant of these tests, and must have one that would put doubt to flight, God met him in the way described and gave the craved assurance.

Like Mr. Moody, he received little or no encouragement from his pastor; but assured now that his call was of God, instead of sinking in the Slough of Despond, he mounts to the summit of fixed Purpose, and plans for the needed preparation. He is wise enough to know that, if he would teach others, he must himself first be taught; that if he would preach to others, he must possess the Gospel to be proclaimed; that if the Apostles must be with Jesus himself as pupils for three years, and then graduate with a special Pentecostal finishing course in the upper chamber, that he must, like them, seek the needed preparation of both head and heart in order to win success. Providence pointed him to the Ohio Wesleyan University at Delaware, Ohio, and here he determined to go.

He was now without employment and without money. Persons with less pluck would have folded their hands and said "Impossible." Not so with him. He prayed and planned and sought the means, and his

efforts were blessed of God.

At this point young men who are called to the ministry are usually met by several enemies sent by Satan, clad in robes of light, to prevent their thorough preparation for the work of life. The name of the first is Gain. He says, "Follow me, and I will make you a millionaire." Many look at the luxuries that Gain will give, and allured, turn aside. The next is Political Renown. He says, "Follow me, and I will give you political position and the applause of men." Many have listened to him, and too late have seen their folly and lamented it. The next is Matrimony. She whispers, "Lay your books aside and heed my counsels, and I will give you a beautiful home, redolent with the perfumes that are wafted from fadeless flowers, thrilled by entrancing music and adorned by paintings, such as only Love can paint." Thus with honeyed words she often charms her victim and he often yields, only in later life to become the victim of deep regret.

If a youth remains unswayed under all of the seductive wiles of these subtle tempters, then a fourth, more dangerous than them all, appears to make a final effort. His name is "Zeal Without Knowledge." He looks pious, talks pious, and sometimes is pious, but in infancy his brain was impaired and he never recovered; hence he is a perilous advisor. He says "See, thousands of souls are being lost while you are tarrying at this preparatory work; if you love them, leave it and hasten to their rescue." He ignores the fact that while persons are engaged in preparatory work they can be winning souls, and that to go out unduly prepared is to be like a farmer who is in such a hurry to save his ripened grain that he has not time to grind his blunted sickle knives. This enemy, strange as it may seem, deceives some whom all the others are unable to ensnare.

To the sophistries of all of these deceptive voices, Mr. Weber turned a deaf ear. When Poverty arose and said, "I positively prohibit you from putting your plans for needed preparation into practice," he laughed Poverty in the face, and fell upon his knees, pleading the interposition of Divine help.

The next morning he said to his aunt, "I am going to get a job today." She asked where he would get it. He replied, "I don't know; but God has given me the evidence, and he will give me a job." Her only reply was, "You are a peculiar fellow." His prayer was answered. Work and good wages were given, and Oct. 3d, 1877, he started for the university with a thankful heart, glad hopes, and \$225 in cash.

If such a young man as this lives, and proves as persistent and wise in seeking and retaining the education that is found in the "Pentecostal upper chamber" as the head culture that is also essential, the time will come when his prayers will make thrones tremble and kingdoms crumble. Some with clear spiritual perceptions will begin to see that a cyclone center is forming, which, nursed in the tropic zone of spiritual and mental light and fire, will ere long sweep through the regions of drought and death with a fury that is born from above.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/martin-knapp/conviction-conversion-and-call-to-the-ministry/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**