

Seven New Testament Soul-Winners

by

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CHAPTER SIX

PAUL - THE PASSIONATE SOUL-WINNER

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3)

THE history of the apostle Paul, as recorded in the Book of Acts, is so well known that it would compare in familiarity with the history of Moses as recorded in the Old Testament or even with that of CHRIST as recorded in the New.

From the day of his conversion, as given in the 9th chapter of the Book, to the end of that volume, he takes first place in that ancient archive.

This exaltation is due solely to his accomplishments, character, and competence. When one is introduced to Saul of Tarsus he immediately becomes cognizant of the fact that he has met a real man - a scholar and saint combined in one. He is of the sort that rivets attention, rewards study, and excites ever-growing admiration.

While we have selected this text of Romans 9:3 as a fit expression of our theme - PAUL, THE PASSIONATE SOULWINNER - we propose to interpret it in the light of the Acts' history.

Proceeding on that basis, we will be impressed with

- The Apostle's Radical Conversion,
- The Peril of His People, and
- The Passion of His Service. [74]

His Conversion Was Radical

He was unexpectedly convinced of CHRIST's Deity.

When he went to the High Priest and secured of him letters to Damascus that he might effect the arrest, trial and conviction of the Christians, he was thoroughly convinced that CHRIST was a deceiver.

He knew the history of Theudas who had boasted "**himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought**" (Acts 5:36).

He also knew the history of Judas of Galilee who had drawn "**away much people after him:**" and also how he had miserably perished, "**and all, even as many as obeyed him were dispersed**" (Acts 5:37).

And he was convinced that CHRIST was only another of the same sort.

But when, "**as he journeyed, . . . there shined round about him a light from heaven: and**" as "**he fell to the earth**" he "**heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?**"; and in response to his question "**Who art thou, Lord?**" the answer came, - "**I am Jesus whom thou persecutest**" his conversion was instant! His doubts of Deity died at that moment! Perhaps, after all, there is no argument for the Deity of JESUS CHRIST comparable to that of a clear word from Him. To this same hour that instrument - His Word - is potent.

It was when the young Charles Spurgeon heard from the Lord the words "**Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved**" that he was convinced. It was when Frederick Brown, Sr., the editor of *Ram's Horn*, heard a word from the Lord that he was saved. It was a word from the Lord that reached the heart of B. H. Carroll and, in a few minutes, changed him from a skeptic to a Christian.

Little wonder that Paul later wrote:-

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, . . . " (Romans 1:16).

Nor yet is it any amazement that he enjoined upon his junior, Timothy, - "**Preach the word.**"
There is power in the Word! [75]

His conversion was as sudden as complete.

There are people who would persuade us that conversion is the product of information, - the gradual effect of education. Such teachers tell us that the period of puberty in children is often to be identified with conversion; that the physical changes taking place in the body itself bring about new attitudes toward life and consequently toward religion, and that it is a gradual process requiring time for its development. If so, this much is certain, viz. Paul's conversion was not after that manner! He was changed suddenly; "in the wink of an eye" so to speak: and if conversion were only such changes as nature and time work it would be logical to doubt whether mature people could ever be converted at all, and would, therefore, result in rather a hopeless Gospel for those upon whom rested the weight of any considerable number of years.

The Gospel is unique in that it is adapted to all times, to all conceivable human conditions, to all possible circumstances, to men without respect to color, race or residence, and equally adapted to people of all ages.

The radical conversion, such as Paul experienced, is commonly known only to men of some advanced years.

The child, in his simplicity of faith, may yield his heart to JESUS and offer his life and love without being conscious of any revolution whatever; but not so with the man of advanced years. His alignments with the world, his entanglements with the flesh, his alliances with the devil are too many!

When they are broken it is like a discharge of dynamite in the rock quarry. There are dozens of points at which breaking and tearing and readjustment must take place; and while it may require some time for the sound to die away, and each misplaced stone to find its rest, the space of time is short!

Regeneration, though permanent, is sudden and violent: and Paul will forever stand out as GOD's answer to those who oppose emotional religion, and as an adequate reply to those who dispute sudden conversion. [76]

This conversion effected many new relations.

Judaism had to be repudiated in large part;

- its multiplied traditions, that were without Biblical basis, had to go;
- its doctrine of "**salvation by works**" was flung forever into the discard;
- its performance of rituals and ceremonies were seen to be valueless.

When Paul came to write his Epistle to the Hebrews he tells the world, and especially the church of GOD, why he parted company from Judaism forever, and accepted CHRIST and Christianity as the inspiration of life, the basis of hope and the motive of endeavor.

Charles Edward Jefferson, writing on "*The Character of Paul*," says:-

"Paul at the age of thirty had brilliant prospects. Because of his ability and education and noble character, all doors were open to him. No one knows how high a place he might have won in the Jewish world had he never become a Christian. By saying that he had seen JESUS alive after the crucifixion, he put an end forever to all hope of earthly advancement. There was no room for him anywhere, either in Jerusalem or in Tarsus. Every avenue was blocked - every door was locked and barred. His own family cast him off. His old friends turned against him. His fellow students in Jerusalem gave him the cold shoulder."

Did Paul ever grieve these losses? Hear him while he writes to the Philippians:-

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord . . . "

We who are in CHRIST JESUS **"have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of**

Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. [77]

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:1-14).

The Peril of His People

He saw that their hopes were falsely based.

Dr. A. J. Frost, for ten years the dean of The Northwestern Bible School, and, for the same length of time, my efficient co-laborer in theological teaching, used to speak often of the ten **"better things"** (Hebrews 6:9) that the apostle Paul had found in CHRIST, and of which he spoke in comparison:-

1. **"the better estate"** (1:4),
2. **"the better hope"** (7:19),
3. **"the better testament"** (7:22),
4. **"the better Mediator"** (8:6),
5. **"better covenant"** (8:6),
6. **"better promises"** (8:6),
7. **"better sacrifices"** (9:23),
8. **"better substance"** (10:34),
9. **"better country"** (11:16),
10. **"better resurrection"** (11:35),

and he drew on Paul's letter to his own people, for the proof of it all.

To be able to turn people from falsehood to truth is to break the power of darkness and flood the soul with light. To be able to take them from trust in ceremonies to a living faith in CHRIST - Paul knew, from experience, what that means. [78]

Robert Murray McCheyne in his *Memoirs*, tells the story of 30,000 Spaniards who came from over the Pyrenees into France to escape the civil wars (poor Spain is still torn by the same). He says that some Geneva youths determined to take the opportunity to give each of them a

Testament. The London Society provided them with ten thousand copies. They started to thoroughly distribute them; but Spanish priests immediately appeared and would not allow the boys to receive or keep a copy. Many of them were burned; they called it "a Plague."

But one youth bought and kept his Testament, read it, believed it, and found JESUS; and when his companions moved on, he stayed behind to learn more about CHRIST.

And Robert Murray McCheyne said, "Was not this one precious soul worth all the expense and trouble a thousand times over?"

I have just read *Under His Wings*, by R. W. Hambrook, of the U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C.

Having finished an address before the New York Teacher's Association at Syracuse, he took plane for Washington. The ice, forming from excessive cold, killed one engine and the plane crashed. For two days and nights the pilot and two co-pilots and Hambrook faced death from freezing. Two futile attempts were made to break through three feet of snow and find their way out. All available material was burned to keep warm. All window curtains and cloth of every kind was wrapped about them for warmth. Dozens of searching fliers failed to sight them. As hope dwindled and death threatened, Hambrook pleaded with the three men to accept CHRIST and was rewarded by seeing them surrender one after another. Finally help came.

In recounting the incident, Hambrook said, "An \$80,000 plane was destroyed, 9,000 gallons of gasoline was burned by us, thousands by searchers - the expense was enormous, but three men won to CHRIST! It was worth all the agony to families, and all the expense incurred!"

That is something akin to Paul's conception of soul value, and that is the explanation of his cry, **"I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."** [79]

He had been made conscious of their unsaved and sinful estate.

In the effulgence of that light which shined round about him on the Damascus way, he saw himself as he was - a sinner in GOD's sight.

Seeing himself, he saw also every Israelite in the same condition. Would that a kindred awakening could come to the saved of this century; and to the membership of the professed evangelical churches of the land!

Bishop James E. Freeman, when he was yet pastor in Minneapolis, said: "The modern complexity of church administration has brought the ministry to the breaking point. It has laid upon the shoulders of the church's chosen leaders burdens too heavy to be borne. It has brought about a situation that has resulted in the impairment of the pastoral and prophetic offices. It has called for an outlay of time and money, the volume of which has mounted from year to year. It has put the church in competition with secular agencies and placed it at a disadvantage it can not readily overcome. It has shifted the emphasis from a concern for souls to a concern for bodies."

How true! Would that the Church could be aroused to soul-interest!

He discovered the Saviour in their own Scriptures.

Just as Peter, on the day of Pentecost, got a new conception of GOD's Holy Word, and in the light of what he knew about JESUS, so preached that Word as to produce the conviction of thousands, so now his brother Paul, flinging the Hebrew traditions aside, not only began to feed his own soul with the Scriptures, seeing in them the revelation of the Saviour, but he sought a kindred knowledge for his fellow Jews.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, the model evangelist of more recent years, tells the story of a man in Chicago who was not regarded by his acquaintances as even bright, but who loved the Lord ardently, and who, in one of the missions had been pointed to CHRIST, and immediately became a student and interpreter of the Word of GOD. He wore out three Bibles in three years. [80]

A certain editor made up his mind that he would like to see and hear him, and going up to his poor room in a garret, he said to him, "Would you mind to read the Bible to me?"

He replied joyfully, "O yes! Yes!"

The editor in reporting it said, "I thought I had heard the Bible read. I thought I had read the Bible myself. But as this man read it, with tears flowing down his face and his voice trembling, I said to him, "Tell me, what is the secret of your power?" He hesitated, and then said, "I have seen JESUS!"

That was the secret of Paul's power; he had seen the Lord and when he saw, he was made to feel like Isaiah, "**I am an unclean man**"; as Peter did in His presence, "**I am a sinner**," and to know that all his fellows were in kindred estate, under condemnation, under the death-sentence, doomed!

But Paul also discovered their way of escape.

CHRIST had said on one occasion, "**I am the way.**"

It was that day, when, doubtless anticipating His own decease, on the cross, He sought to comfort His disciples by saying, "**Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a Place for you. And if I go and prepare a Place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest,' and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**"

Sir Robert Anderson has a great book on *The Way* and, of course, it presents none other than CHRIST as the Way.

"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

On one occasion CHRIST said, "**Search the scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me**" (John 5:39). [81]

His Concern Was All-Consuming

He yearned for their souls!

He was indeed burdened for his people, Israel.

Fifty years ago the plain farmer Christians, among whom I spent my boyhood, were accustomed to meet and greet one another, and then ask the question, "Brother, have you any burden for souls?"

I fear the greatest weakness of the Church of GOD at this present moment is at that point; no burden for souls!

Revivals are difficult to explain; but as near as we can discover their secret, I am persuaded that they are born out of "burden for souls."

That burden necessarily involves other things:

1. Belief in the soul's immortality;
2. The acceptance of the Scripture teaching concerning the possibility of an eternal damnation;
3. A sense of individual responsibility for reaching the lost and unsaved.

Richard Kill, the great predecessor of Charles Spurgeon, once said: "If there was but one soul unsaved in some far off land, so precious would that soul be in the sight of GOD that it would be worth while for every Christian in the world to make a personal journey to tell that single man the story of salvation."

If we believed that, urgent appeals for missions would never again be necessary; and if we believed that, the deadly indifference which now lies upon the church like a paralysis, would become impossible.

Years ago Mr. Hanly, the Governor of Indiana, was an ardent Christian. Speaking at Washington, Ind., one day, he noticed in the very front row of the great crowd that had gathered, a little lad with rosy cheeks and big brown eyes, who was eagerly listening. Glancing at him, Hanly said, "Give that bright-eyed little chap down there, a chance. The saving of that one boy's soul is more important than the election of a president, or the success of any political party." [82]

Would that the politicians of this day were under that conviction. What a marvelous influence it would have on the question of the saloon, for instance, and on the question of social economy, and on the question of Church and State.

Paul stood ready for any needful sacrifice.

He affirmed his willingness to be lost himself if Israel could be saved; to go down to death and hell and endure the torments of the damned if they might be redeemed.

Gipsy Smith tells this story of W. T. Stead, and it is a pleasure to repeat it.

He said that Mr. Stead went with him down to Rhondda Valley to spend a Sunday with him in the mission he was holding at Pontyridd. At the close of the evening service, Mr. Stead went into the inquiry room, where two or three hundred men and women were, to watch the personal work, and as he sat there a young collier came up and spoke to him, and said, "Mr. Stead, I represent six of my chums who are at work now down in the pit. They have sent me to bring you a message. We had made up our minds to be infidels, and we thought we were. But we worshipped you, Mr. Stead. You have been our hero! We read everything of yours that we could get; and a few months ago we read one of your articles that knocked the infidelity out of us and made us give our hearts to GOD. My companions asked me to come and thank you for that article."

Mr. Stead was greatly moved. He gripped the young fellow's hand and wept for very joy. And Gipsy Smith said, "Later, when we were alone, he said to me, 'Smith, nothing in my life has given me such supreme joy as when that young collier gripped my hand and said that I had been the means of saving himself and his companions. I felt that I would like to quit the editor's chair and become an evangelist!' " [83]

Paul devoted his life to one great endeavor.

Paul's record from the day of his conversion till the day when his head was severed by the hand of the axe-man, shows that he moves with one purpose and one only - to reach men, to bring men to CHRIST! That to him was the supreme purpose of life. It was the only occasion of living; and when he ascended into Heaven itself, he could imagine nothing that would surpass the joy of greeting his converts - "**his joy; his crown!**" Little wonder!

What true Christian ever lived who could ask any reward equal to the reward of souls saved - their sins forgiven?

When I was a lad I used to have the privilege occasionally of hearing John B. Gough, and I enjoyed one of the stories reported as told by him in Cooper Institute, New York.

He said: "I have in my house a small handkerchief, not worth three cents to you, but you could not buy it from me. A woman brought it and gave it to my wife, and said, 'I am very poor; I would give your husband a thousand pounds if I had it; but I brought this. I married with the fairest and brightest prospects before me; but my husband took to drinking, and everything went. The pianoforte my mother gave, and everything, was sold, until at last I found myself in a miserable room. My husband lay drunk in a corner, and my child, that was lying on my knee, was restless. I sang "*The Light of other Days has Faded*;' and wet my handkerchief through with my tears. My husband; said she to my wife, 'met Mr. Gough. He spoke a few words to him and gave him a grasp of the hand, and now for six years my husband has been to me all that a husband can be to a wife, and we are getting our household goods together again. I have brought your husband the very handkerchief I wet through that night with my tears, and I want him, when

he is speaking, to remember that he has wiped away those tears from me, I trust in GOD, forever.' "

"Ah;' said Gough, "these are the trophies that make men glad!"

May GOD grant us all some such precious trophies of faithful work done for CHRIST! [84]

~ end of chapter 6 ~
