

Seven New Testament Soul-Winners

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

JESUS - THE SUPREME SOUL-WINNER

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10)

IN PRESENTING this seventh subject of "*New Testament Soul Winners*" let it be clearly understood that while I am employing the theme "*JESUS, the Supreme Soul Winner*;" it is not my purpose to introduce comparison. He is, in all things, the incomparable One. On that very account He becomes a perfect Example in all matters of life and labor.

It will be remembered that, on one occasion - when engaged in the menial service of washing His disciples' feet - He said to them:

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

And even in the matter of soul winning we have a kindred suggestion. Our text tells us His objective in coming to the world:-

" . . . the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

And to His disciples He said:-

" . . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

There is all the difference, then, between the study of CHRIST as a Soul Winner and the study of the best of His disciples that exists between the perfect and the imperfect. [85]

As a perfect Example he standeth solitary and alone.

We would do well, therefore, to study

- His Definite Objective,
- His Adroit Methods, and
- His Degree of Success.

His Definite Objective

He saw men as sinners in GOD's sight.

He, Who knew what was in man, never suffered any delusion nor indulged in any false philosophies on that subject. He "**came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance**" (Luke 5:32).

He believed with the Psalmist concerning mankind - "**They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one**" (Psalm 14:3).

He held with Paul's statement to the Romans:-

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11).

The modernist educator has evolved from his own brain a theory which oftentimes finds echo in pulpits - supposed to be evangelical - to the effect that a man is not a sinner, but merely an animal, immature as yet in development, and consequently subject to mis-steps and mistakes.

It is not so many years ago that a pulpit in this city declared that "the primary mission of organized Christianity is not the salvaging of derelict sinners but the training of young people so that they will never become derelicts."

On the other hand, Dr. W. N. Clarke in his "*Outline of Christian Theology*" - rankly modern as he was - admits "The Christian revelation uniformly addresses man as a sinful being. It represents the race as involved in moral evil, and the individual as transgressing the law that he ought to obey. The constant appeal of the Scriptures is an appeal against sin . . . ," while Dr. J. B. Champion, conservative theologian, finds the secret of Paul's power in his "exceedingly deep estimate of the sinfulness of sin." [86]

He says:

"No such arraignment of it can be found anywhere, as in the early part of Romans."

Paul refused to devitalize the Gospel by a shallow estimate even of his own sin.

The only adequate explanation, or even justification, of JESUS CHRIST's visit to our world existed in the circumstances of man's sin.

He considered the souls of men as both lost and doomed.

Our text refers directly to that conviction. He came "**to seek and to save that which is lost.**"

Perhaps no single chapter in the Sacred Book contains three such effective illustrations as Luke 15!

That chapter opens with the statement:-

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him," and the three parables spoken on that occasion in answer to the Pharisees' charge - **"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"** - represented men as "lost" by reason of sin.

- it was a **"lost"** sheep that the shepherd hunted;
- it was the **"lost"** piece of money that the married woman diligently sought until she found it;
- it was the **"lost"** prodigal that the Father received with joy.

Robert F. Horton in *"Teachings of JESUS"* says: "Dark, defiled, demon-haunted spirit, black with venom and despair, you, the worst of men, you are a man, therefore the Son of Man does not despair of you. Rather, He has set His heart on saving you. He has come to seek and to save that which is lost."

Lost men are not always conscious of their condition; in fact, they are commonly unconscious of it, and, on that account, indifferent to danger.

There is a story of an Indian evangelist who in his sermon was interrupted by a flippant youth who said:-

"You talk to us about the burden of sin. I feel none. How heavy is it - ten, fifty or eighty pounds? What is its weight?" [87]

The preacher instantly replied:-

"If you laid ten, fifty, eighty or one hundred pounds on a corpse, would it be conscious of the load?"

"Certainly not," said the youth. "A corpse is dead."

"Exactly so," answered the minister. "That is why you are unconscious of the load of sin; you are **'dead in trespasses and in sins.'**"

CHRIST came not to confer with the "found" but to seek the "lost." He came not to improve the living but to **"quicken the dead."**

Concerning the saints it is written:

"And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

He came to provide and proffer salvation!

Anticipating His appearance, Isaiah said:-

"And it shall be said in that day, lo this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us .. ." (Isaiah 25:9).

Concerning His birth it was remarked:-

" . . . **thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins**" (Matthew 1:21).

And Luke, when he gave us the Book of the Acts, wrote of Him:-

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name, under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Robert Murray McCheyne, that matchless Scotch minister, who, like his Master, had finished a marvelous life at thirty-three, writing from Dundee, Scotland, to a friend who was in darkness, said:-

"I have sinned more deeply than you. I have sinned against more light and more love, and yet I have found mercy; why may not you? Remember what James Covey said: 'Tell poor sailors that none of them need to despair, since poor blaspheming Covey found mercy.' "

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Why? [88]

It was to save us; not to save good people; not to save angels, but sinners. Perhaps you will say, "But I am too bad a sinner." Paul answers:-

"I was the chief of sinners."

Yet he was saved by CHRIST; so CHRIST is willing and able to save you. If CHRIST came into this world to die to save sinners such as you, would it not be a frightful thing if you died without being saved by Him?

What has the world done for you that you love it so much?

- Did the world die for you?
- Did the world blot out your sins or change your heart?
- Will the world carry you to Heaven?

No, no!

Come and try the pleasures of CHRIST.

I have not been at a dance or any worldly amusement for many years, and yet I believe I have had more pleasure in a single day than you have had all your life. **"A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."**

Holding this subject of saving men, as JESUS ever did, it is interesting to study-

His Adroit Methods

He called the willing ones to himself!

I confess it has always been a marvel to me to read the story of CHRIST's first disciples.

They were fishermen; and professional fishermen are commonly tough. That Peter was given to profanity we know full well from his lapse into old habits in the high priest's porch. How many other sins beset those fishermen we do not know, but can readily imagine that they were not few; and yet, on the testimony of John the Baptist, they believed, and at their first opportunity "**they followed Him.**"

When Andrew went after Simon Peter, he needed only to say,- "**We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ**" (John 1:41). "**And he brought him to Jesus.**"

Philip heard only the Master's invitation "**Follow me**" and he responded, and shortly brought with him to the same discipleship Nathanael.

We marvel at this!

But I believe that we have a Scriptural and sufficient explanation of this early success in winning men from sin to Himself. There is a reference to it in the same chapter that records the decision of the first disciples. It was His Baptism, at the hands of John, at which time the Spirit of GOD descended from Heaven like a dove and abode upon Him. [89]

Who doubts that the presence of the HOLY GHOST in any life completes the powers of persuasion? And who questions that the very lack of His endowment often explains the dearth characterizing our endeavor, or even the lack of endeavour itself?

Peter had been a disciple of JESUS for some time, but, so far as the record goes, had won no one to Him; but "**when the day of Pentecost was fully come**" he suddenly blossomed into a superb soul-winner.

The reason is not far to seek; that day he spake in the power of the Spirit, and men buried their faces in the dust and cried: "**What shall we do!**"

It was after Father Chiniquy had spent twenty-four hours in importunate prayer that his preaching brought over a thousand people to CHRIST,- the product of a single sermon!

It was after Moody had surrendered himself "**wholly unto the Lord**" that he himself stood amazed at the result of the sermon in London!

I have no patent on the way to secure power! I am loathe even to suggest seeking methods; but from a study of Scripture and the observation upon successful soul-winners, I am fully persuaded that no man will find easy the work of soulwinning until he is Spirit-endued.

He convinced the skeptical by appeal to Scripture.

Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. Fearing for his personal popularity he sought JESUS under the cover of darkness, and after having conceded that His miracles were the signs of His Divine commission, he questioned Him on the way of salvation. When JESUS answered him, saying,-

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and further added - **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,"**

He was appealing directly to the Jewish Scriptures, and using almost the exact language of Ezekiel 36:25- [90]

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

In the Old Testament the promise might seem, by the context, to belong to Israel only; but in the New Testament statement of our Master, no such limitations were laid upon it. A kindred thing takes place in Acts 2 where Peter appeals to that same Old Testament Scripture to convince his own kith and kin that they had crucified CHRIST, and to reveal to them, in JESUS of Nazareth, a Saviour.

Can mortal man improve upon the Master's methods in this matter? Certainly not!

Those evangelists who have taken classes to train in soul-winning, and have led them to commit to memory passages of Scripture with which to deal with every difficulty and doubt, have been wise masterbuilders. GOD's Word never returns void. It accomplishes that which He pleases and prospers in the thing whereto He hath sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

It is **"the power of God unto salvation."** **"Preach the word."**

In other words, imitate your Master's example!

With that same Word He instructed the immoral sinner.

In John 4 we have the record of the woman at the well.

She was a Hollywoodite; she was a veritable Reno addict; she had had five husbands, and was illegally living with the sixth. Her pious question - **"Where should men worship?"** - deceived Him in nothing. He shortly made clear to her the fact that it was not a question of place, but of spirit, even as the Old Testament had taught, and that the CHRIST to come, prophesied in this same Scriptures, was now there and addressing her. **"I that speak unto thee am He."**

CHRIST knew full well that nothing produced in man such a sense of sin as to see the face of GOD.

In Isaiah 6 we read the prophet's statement:-

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (vs. 1). [91]

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, . . ." (vs. 5).

When Daniel had his vision of the Lord, there remained no strength in him, and his comeliness was turned into corruption (Daniel 10:8).

Peter never appreciated his soul-stains as he did on that morning when, at the sea-side, the miracle of the fishes enclosed in the net convinced him that JESUS was GOD. Then it was that **"he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"** (Luke 5:8).

To this good hour there is no way of driving men to a sense of sin comparable to the presentation of JESUS CHRIST, the sinless One! It is when they have seen Him that they are condemned; it is the sight of His face that brings contrition and confession.

Here again our Lord's method is the adequate example for all servants who would be soul-winners.

But before I finish, let me speak briefly on-

His Degree of Success

Let us remark first-

His success was not one hundred percent.

There are people who, when they have sought to win others to CHRIST and failed, become discouraged and feel that there is something wrong with them, and often say, "We might just as well quit."

But a study of the life of CHRIST in His office as a Soul Winner tends to condemn this process of reasoning. He was not always successful, and yet His failures were not made an excuse for cessation of endeavor.

Take the rich young ruler who came to his Master and said, **"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"** JESUS failed with him; and while He grieved that ruler's course, He ceased not from undertaking with others. [92]

On another occasion He went back to His own home and spent a Sabbath Day, teaching; but they refused His Word, and it is written,-

"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk,

and healed them" (Mark 6:5).

The statement concerning JESUS that He "**was in all points tempted like as we are . . .**" (Hebrews 4:15) finds full illustration in the Divine record.

The man who is easily discouraged and gives over the divinely-appointed task after a few, or even many, failures is not imitating his Master.

A while ago I fell upon an article, and clipped it for my Scrap Book, rehearsing the failures that characterized Lincoln's life; and they were not few.

- When he first ran for the Legislature in Illinois he was badly beaten.
- When he entered upon the business life, a worthless partner involved him and left him to hold the bag of multiplied debts.
- The young woman to whom he was engaged died.
- His first candidacy for Congress came to naught.
- His application for a position in the U. S. Land Office was declined.
- When he ran for the U. S. Senate he lost out.
- When he became a candidate for the office of Vice President on the Republican ticket in 1856 he failed to secure the nomination.
- When in 1858 he ran for the U. S. Senate his old foe, Stephen Douglas, won against him;

and yet none of these defeats, these apparent failures, ended his endeavor. He plodded on with purposeful objectives until he held, and filled, in a way to make his name immortal, the highest position known to the mighty nation in which he was a citizen.

There is much in the old line from the poet:-

"If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try again."

CHRIST commonly convinced His man.

His disciples were, many of them, won directly by Him.

His converts were sufficient so that when He was ready to ascend, about five hundred of them were there to witness His going (I Corinthians 15:6).

It is true that CHRIST's method was not that of direct appeal, but a representation instead. He won a few and commissioned them to win other fellows; and yet when the short period of time between His Baptism and consequent public ministry and His Ascension to the right hand of the Father is considered, the result is nothing short of amazing! [93]

It becomes all the more meaningful when we remember the opposition He faced, the prejudices that everywhere thwarted His endeavors, and the godlessness of the generation to which He belonged.

This much is certain that He passed up all other professions and callings and committed Himself wholly to one - the saving of men!

What a reproof to us all, and what a special rebuke to those who, notwithstanding their profession of loyalty to CHRIST, spend their whole time in other occupation!

Dr. W. E. Biederwolf, in one of his volumes, tells of an old deacon he had known who was engaged in the sheep business. He would go through all sorts of the worst weather-storm and flood-to save a sheep. At every prayer meeting he would get up and talk about what he called "the precious cause" and "perishing immortal souls," but that old deacon never cared for the soul of any man. He lived and died in the sheep business; he made money in it, and kept it. And all the while the great world of earnest, aspiring, yet doubting, faltering men were never helped one bit or brought one whit closer to GOD for his having lived in it!

We fear there are more like the deacon than like our dear Lord.

Finally, He made the miracle a medium of soul-access.

He wrought many miracles, the records of which dot the New Testament pages. These are days when the self-styled intelligentsia deny the miracle - possibility; but you may be surprised if you read the New Testament afresh to find that Dr. Luke - who was at once a scholar and a physician - records more of these miracles than any other New Testament writer. Never once does he express a doubt of them.

Dr. Howard A. Kelly, the great Christian surgeon and scientist - the most outstanding man of his profession in America - in an address to physicians in Philadelphia recently said:-

"When my friends tell me they do not believe in the miracles, I reply that there is only one miracle I cannot believe in, and that is, that this Book was written by men without that Divine guidance from GOD's HOLY SPIRIT." [94]

It is this constant and eternal questioning of GOD's power that has paralyzed the church, and it is the doubts that men entertain concerning CHRIST's power to heal and CHRIST's power to save that interferes alike with the health of men's bodies and the redemption of men's souls.

Long since the golden-mouthed Chrysostom said to the skeptics of his day:-

"Do ye desire, yourselves, even in your own days, to behold miracles? I will show you a miracle greater than any wrought before - not merely one dead man raised to life, not merely one blind man restored to sight; but so many nations scraping off the leprosy of sin, and cleansed by the washing of regeneration."

We pray, as individuals and as a church, for a revival; we ask GOD to grant us the salvation of the souls of acquaintances, friends and loved ones. His reply must ever be, "**Only believe;**" "**All things are possible to him that believeth**" (Mark 9:23).

Yet "**faith, if it hath not works, is dead**" (James 2:17).

My people know this to be my favorite hymn:

Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From His lighthouse ever more;
But to us He gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.

Dark the night of sin has settled,
Loud the angry billows roar;
Eager eyes are watching, longing,
For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother!
Some poor seaman, tempest-tossed,
Trying now to make the harbor,
In the darkness may be lost.

CHORUS:

Let the lower lights be burning!
Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save. [95]

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