

Seven New Testament Soul-Winners

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CHAPTER FIVE

PETER - THE POPULAR SOUL-WINNER

IN BRINGING to your attention the outstanding soul winners of New Testament record, we have discussed John the Baptist, the Pioneer Soul Winner; Andrew, the Fraternal Soul Winner; Philip, the Tactful Soul Winner, and Ananias, the Skillful Soul Winner.

Peter was intentionally reserved for a later and higher place as we intended from the first to present these names in an ascending scale.

It will not be forgotten that the Gospels have much to say concerning this apostle, but the Gospel record deals with him as a disciple of JESUS, rather than an apostle, a student rather than a commissioned man.

His conspicuous place with James and John, constituting the inner circle of CHRIST's intimates, had occasions, of course; and, in spite of his three-fold denial of the Master in the crisis hour, Peter still retained those greater essentials to final success, which the Master's discerning eyes had clearly seen.

It requires, therefore, the Book of the Acts to bring before us this apostle's ability and value; and it can never be forgotten that that book opens with the story of the baptism of the Spirit, the promised endowment from on high. All that is recorded of Peter from Acts 1 on, seems a certain result of that spiritual experience as it affected what we call inborn or native talents. [61]

In a cursory survey of the Acts' record, we are impressed with:

- "Peter, the Pulpit Orator;"
- "Peter, the Personal Instructor," and
- "The Private Ministry of Peter."

Peter, The Pulpit Orator

"It was when the day of Pentecost was fully come," when the HOLY GHOST had fallen upon, the Christian company, that Peter became conspicuous. The report of his speech and conduct

impresses us with the following facts:

First, he compelled attention!

"Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying, Ye men of Judea and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and give ear unto my words" (Acts 1:14).

To rivet the attention of any crowd is an oratorical art.

To compel the attention of an excited and vocal crowd requires both a dynamic personality and a superb speech. That ability was never more needed than now. The mad race for money and pleasure, the stream-lined transportation conveyances, the airships - these are all symbolic of an age indisposed to quiet and attention. Church attendance, therefore, is on the wane the country over. Sunday night services have been given up entirely by a big majority, and even in our so-called evangelical sanctuaries. Among those that still keep open house, most questionable advertising and procedures are often employed to attract attention and effect attendance.

Thousands of preachers find themselves in kindred cases with the lad who came in from the lake with his pole over his shoulder and fishing sack empty.

A stranger, meeting him, said, "Well, boy, what luck?"

To which the young fisherman replied, "None; I couldn't seem to git their attention."

Arthur Pierson, that matchless minister of yesterday, said sanely enough, "There is no higher secret of all true study or application of mind than the convergence of all the faculties toward one point - the gathering up of the thoughttrays in the focus of attention." And then, he sadly remarked, "How few people there are who know the fine art of listening." [62]

Peter then is to be congratulated in that, no sooner had he begun to speak, than the crowd calmed, and thousands were giving attention.

Second, he appealed to Scripture.

Defending his fellow disciples against the charge of drunkenness, he said,

"This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, etc., etc." (Acts 2:16, ff).

From the moment he opened his mouth until he had reached his conclusion by charging them with having "**crucified both the Lord and Christ,**" he ceased not his Biblical quotations.

The Pentecostal sermon was neither more nor less than a quotation and application of Scriptural texts. Might not that be the explanation of the Pentecostal result - thousands brought under

conviction? If we were asked to name the most debilitating feature of the average twentieth century sermon, and thereby account for its non-effectiveness, we should, without hesitation, say "Its non-scriptural character."

GOD never made any promise to pulpit eloquence, nor yet to mental speculation, or philosophies - new or old. He has, however, made very definite promises concerning His word.

By Isaiah, the mighty Evangel of Old Testament times, he said, "**For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I Please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it**" (Isaiah 55:10, 11). [63]

Paul, also, in writing to the Romans said, "**I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek**" (Romans 1:16).

To the Corinthians he wrote, "**The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto them who are saved, it is the power of God.**"

We hear a great deal these days about the need of Revival.

Quite a few people are engaged in praying for the coming of revival, and beyond all question the future of the church is dependent upon a revival. But this may be accepted as certain, viz., no revival can come or will come, until both the preachers and the laymen return to the use of the Word of GOD - the Spirit's sole instrument of salvation.

Peter was not an educated man. He had no university degree, no high school diploma; and I am not even certain that his education, in secular matters, would have sufficed the demands of the grade school. But Peter had one fitness for preaching, which can never be ignored by any denomination or even discredited by any committee on organization, and that was familiarity with the Holy Book and ability to draw from its treasures convicting truths.

A few days since my attention was called to what Charles Augustus Briggs, the outstanding leader among liberals at the end of the last century, had to say upon the authority of the sacred Scriptures. Little wonder that he was put on trial for his infidelity. In his volume, *Whither*, he asserts, "The sacred Scriptures are not the only source of Christian theology . . . The Bible does not decide all questions of religion. It does not decide the mode of baptism, etc.

"The Bible does not decide on questions of doctrines; it does not give us the mode of creation, the origin of sin and evil, etc.

"The Bible does not decide on questions of morals; it does not decide against slavery or polygamy; it does not determine thousands of political and social questions that have sprung up in our day."

How far removed from the claim of the Bible itself and the faith of the Fathers were such assertions. [64]

The French Confession, the Belgic Confession, the Westminster Confession, the Church of England Confession, the Congregational Confession, the Baptist Confession, and the Confession of the Methodists - these all agree in paying to this Book the tribute of clear teaching, a divine revelation upon all subjects of human concern.

It was the denial of this fact spoken by Briggs, and adopted by certain of his brethren in unbelief, that has effected an arrested development in the evangelical denominations of the world, brought to thousands of churches a spiritual paralysis, and produced not only dearth of water baptisms in the name of the risen Lord, but crucified much of our foreign mission work, eviscerated the Christian influence of our schools and colleges at home and abroad, and prepared continents, even, for cordiality toward atheistic communism.

The secretary of the Chicago Prayer League said to me sixteen months ago, "We need a world campaign on 'Back to the Bible.' "

Thank GOD for a Peter who found it unnecessary to run a moving picture show in order to attract a crowd, or put on a so-called Christian drama in order to maintain a second Sunday service.

Third, *he produced conviction!*

Turning to our text again, we read, "**Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts.**"

The sense of sin is slowly departing from social circles. There is now an organized endeavor to hasten that procedure.

Only recently, in a little western town where a Baptist college is located and is largely dominant, a young minister, cultured, capable and consecrated, preached the Word, and believing it still had power to produce results, dared to ask for a show of hands on the part of those who, being convicted of sin, desired the prayers of the saved.

Instantly there was organized resentment.

A company of students protested the procedure and demanded its cessation. Young Brougner struck back by charging its leaders with communistic sentiments. Doubtless he was justified! For years modernism had been privileged in that particular school, and modernism and communism have at least this in common, that neither of them believe in the damning effect of sin or the necessity of the soul-salvation. [65]

That is one reason why Liberals maneuver in each one of our denominations to get rid of preachers of the Apostle Peter sort - men who are not skilled in the present day philosophy, men who are not titled in the realm of science, but men who dare to preach the Word of GOD with fervor.

Fortunately, and owing to GOD's grace, we have never been on the self defense in this matter.

We have our college and university degrees earned and honorary, but it is our profound conviction that the Church of GOD would be better off today if it had a ministry of the Apostle Peter's sort - destitute of all literary honor, but entirely familiar with the Word of GOD - than it is under the superintendence of those who can speak the language of science and the speculations of philosophy, but who know not the sacred Scriptures.

However, the pulpit orator reaches the limit of his ability when he has brought men under the conviction of truth.

Then another procedure becomes essential; namely,

Peter. The Personal Instructor

"When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the Test of the apostles, brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Scripture preaching incites soul-questions!

Joseph Parker, easily one of the finest ministers of the nineteenth century, speaking of this famous sermon preached by Peter at Pentecost, says, "Observe the effect; not that they were awed by the eloquence; not that they were excited in their imaginations; not that they were gratified in their taste! The result was infinitely deeper and grander. **'They were pierced in their hearts'**. An arrow had fastened itself in the very center of their life. In their conscience was inserted the sting of intolerable self-accusation. This was the grand miracle."

Has that miracle failed today? To a large extent. Why? [66]

For the very simple reason suggested above - too many men have ceased to employ the **"sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."**

The average preacher thinks the fault is with society. He assigns the deadly indifference of the day to the social customs that have captured the people - the drink habit, the gambling habit, the dance hall, the theater and picture shows, - the passion for pleasure; and beyond all doubt these are very, very effective, and even more effective still is the college philosophy which, as Dan Gilbert has shown, crucifies CHRIST. But after all has been said that may be said, it still remains a fact that men are uneasy in spirit; that men are dissatisfied in heart; that men and women are still forced to question the future with fear and to consider the state of the immortal soul.

When Charles Spurgeon was active in his great ministry at the Metropolitan, there was shown to his study a young Hollander who had come by boat from Flushing to put to him one question, "Mr. Spurgeon, tell me what I must do to be saved."

The great preacher said to him, "Do you mean you have come all this way to ask me that question?"

"I do."

"But," replied the preacher, "you know the answer, '**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved**'."

To this the young Hollander replied, "But I cannot believe in JESUS CHRIST."

"Well, now," said Mr. Spurgeon, "I have believed in Him a good many years, and I am still trusting Him; and if you know something against him that makes my faith a fallacy, tell it to me, for I don't want to be deceived either."

The young man swallowed and said, "Well, sir, I don't know anything against Him."

"Why don't you trust Him, then? Can't you trust me?"

"Yes, Mr. Spurgeon, I could trust you with anything, even my soul, if you wanted that."

"But, you don't know anything about me."

"True, but all I've heard about you has been good." [67]

"Fine," said Mr. Spurgeon, "that is exactly why I trust CHRIST, and you admit you have nothing against Him; the record is clear that He was GOD's Son; that He came to save men from sin, and that in order to do so, He had to die on Calvary's cross - that He willingly did this to prove His love; then ascended to the right hand of the Father and became our high priest to make intercession for us, that we through his atonement should be saved, and you can't trust HIM?"

"Yes; yes; yes; Mr. Spurgeon," said the young Hollander. "I can! I will!"

There is not a week, and there is not a journey that I make across this continent, without hearing by letter or personal visit from some one who says, "I heard you preach CHRIST; I believed, and was saved."

It is far easier to stand in the pulpit and proclaim a revealed truth than to sit beside the inquirer and show him the way; but the second work is as essential as the first, and Peter engaged in it.

He prescribed steps in obedience.

For when they asked "**What shall we do?**" Peter said, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**"

Too bad Peter had to be such a simple-hearted, non-suspecting believer!

According to Charles Augustus Briggs, professor of Hebrew and cognate languages at Union Theological Seminary, "the Bible does not decide the mode of baptism; it does not clearly

determine whether infants are to be baptized."

If that be true, Peter never found it out. To him the mode was exactly what his master practiced in the Jordan at the hands of John, and exactly what Paul told the Romans, "**Buried with Christ by baptism and raised to walk in newness of life with Him.**"

What a symbol when baptism is administered; and how clear the Scriptures become when once the spirit of obedience to the Word of GOD is regnant in the heart. [68]

Nearly forty years ago, after a conference with William Francis, the state secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in Minnesota, he said, "I have fought GOD's word long enough in this matter. I must be obedient to what the Bible plainly teaches." I baptized him in the baptistry in the old church building, and he became one of the noblest associate pastors any minister ever had.

Thirty-five years ago that great and almost matchless layman, W. E. Blackstone, author of *JESUS Is Coming*, speaking in my presence at a conference in Cleveland, Ohio, said, "Baptism when Biblically administered is a beautiful symbol of death to sin, burial with CHRIST, and resurrection to walk in newness of life."

I very soon took up with him the question of personal obedience and later in that same baptistry in the same building, I laid him beneath the baptismal wave.

Twenty-five years ago, the pastor of the People's Church in St. Paul came with Dr. Schmidt and others of his officers to that same study and same building of former days, and said to me, "I have never been baptized Biblically. Will you go with me out to Lake Calhoun and permit me to enjoy that New Testament rite at your hands?" And of course I accommodated him.

Eight or nine years ago "Daddy" Horton, founder and president of Bible Institute of Los Angeles, together with his wife, came to me and both were laid beneath the baptismal wave in a baptistry in Pasadena. Only this last May, dear Paul Rood, president of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, and my own successor in office, in connection with the great conference at Waterloo, said to me, "My conscience is troubling me. The Bible is very clear as to the mode of baptism, and I desire to be obedient. I would like immersion at your hands." And it was my high privilege to baptize him.

Peter was right. Baptism is not an essential to salvation, but it is an act of obedience to GOD, and, if one wants to be saved, the spirit of obedience must be present. That is why he said, "**Buried with Christ by baptism and raised to walk in newness of life with Him.**" [69]

Obedience is more than mere ceremony.

The only sense in which baptism saves is that it becomes "**the answer of a good conscience toward God.**"

It is the blood that cleanses, and it is faith that saves, but a definitely prescribed ceremony becomes GOD's own illustration of regeneration itself. If you are dead to sin, then accept this symbolic burial that when you are raised, you may reveal to the world, by a new life, the

redemption itself.

But the record of Peter's ministry is not only in the second chapter of Acts. It continues its way through this volume until Paul becomes the individual of surpassing interest.

There are three other records in Acts in which Peter plays a conspicuous part.

The Private Ministry of Peter

These three reveal

- a Ministry of Judgment,
- a Ministry of Healing, and
- a Ministry of Instruction.

First of all, *a Ministry of Judgment!*

In Acts 5, the church became the medium of a ministry, and "**none lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto each, according as anyone had need.**"

In that connection Ananias, excited by the big offering of Joses - surnamed by the apostles, Barnabas - sold his possessions and kept back part of it, and together with his wife attempted to lie their way into the good graces of the church as its greatest givers. You remember the result. It fell to the lot of Peter to speak the word of judgment that brought death to them both. It was a dire ministry, and we can readily imagine that it was the most harrowing experience of the apostle's life, but "**believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women**" (5:14).

Possibly one reason why the church today is so powerless is that it privileges place and honor to so many false professors. Church discipline is both a delicate and difficult task, and yet who doubts that a clean church is a conquering one? [70]

If Peter lived now and passed a few such judgments upon the penurious well-to-do for their falsely professed generosity, a committee would be appointed to wait upon him and advise that he seek a new pastorate. But the record would not be what it was in Acts 5; namely, that on his departure "**believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.**"

Still further we find with Peter,

A Ministry of Healing.

" . . . a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately." (9:33, 34).

There are those, and many of them in the pulpit, who oppose divine healing as unbiblical and many of whom denounce it as a deception. However, as Joseph Parker once remarked, "Let us not give way to the mischievous suggestion that certain things happened in apostolic times which are impossible now. It is not so; that is where the church has lost her inspiration, her weight and her spiritual philosophy. She is content to have a CHRIST two thousand years old."

Why? Is not the CHRIST **"the same yesterday and today and forever?** Have His powers become paralyzed with the passing of time? Hardly! It is not so much a question of whether we believe in divine healing, but whether we believe in the divine One, in GOD manifest in the flesh with whom was and is **"all power in heaven and on earth,"** and who **"is the same yesterday, and today and forever."**

Do you believe in Him? If so, you can take not only your sins to him, but also your sicknesses. **"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases"** (Matthew 8:17).

***** BBB NOTE: It is often said, "We believe in divine healing, but not divine healers!" *****

But we follow Peter still further into this book of Acts; [71]

to his Ministry of Instruction:

In the tenth chapter of Acts a centurion of the Italian band in answer to prayer came under conviction, and longed for someone to show him more perfectly the way. GOD revealed to him the place and office of Peter, and at the same time made known to Peter the need of Cornelius.

"Being brought Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth) how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name everyone that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (10:34-43).

The result was, instantly the HOLY GHOST fell upon them.

Baptism in the name of the Lord followed.

Preaching is GOD's own appointed way to save them that believe, but "teaching" is an element

of preaching that can never be ignored. No man is a true preacher who is not also at the same time an effective teacher.

Joseph Parker again said, "Until our teaching be right our life must be wrong. We must ask for the pure bread, the pure water, the undefiled Bible and live on that; out of such nutritious food there will come proper results, such as fellowship, sacramental communion, and common prayer." [72]

Break Thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves
Beside the Sea;
Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee Lord,
My spirit pants for Thee,
O living Word!

Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord,
To me - to me,
As Thou didst bless the bread
By Galilee;
Then shall all bondage cease,
All fetters fall;
And I shall find my peace,
My All in all.

Thou art the bread of life,
Oh Lord, to me,
Thy holy Word the truth
That saveth me;
Give me to eat and live
With Thee above;
Teach me to love Thy truth,
For Thou art love.

O send Thy Spirit, Lord,
Now unto me,
That He may touch my eyes,
And make me see;
Show me the truth concealed
Within Thy Word,
And in Thy Book revealed
I see the Lord. [73]

~ end of chapter 5 ~
