

The PERSONAL EXPERIENCE of the SOUL WINNER

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Every soul-winner is in the secret of the Lord, and has had a definite personal experience of salvation and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which brings him into close fellowship and tender friendship and sympathy with the Saviour. The Psalmist prayed, "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then," said he, "will I teach transgressors Thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." (Psalm 51:10-42.) He saw that before he could be a soul-winner, before he could teach transgressors the way of the Lord and convert sinners, he must have his own sins blotted out; he must have a clean heart and a right spirit; he must be a partaker of the Holy Ghost and of God's joy. In short, he must have a definite, constant, joyful experience of God's salvation

in his own soul in order to save others. It was no "hope-I-am-saved" experience he wanted; nor was it a conclusion carefully reasoned out and arrived at by logical processes; nor an experience based upon a strict performance of a set round of duties and attendance upon sacraments, but a mighty transformation and cleansing of his whole spiritual nature and a glorious new creation wrought within him by the Holy Ghost.

It must be a definite experience that tallies with the Word of God

Only this can give that power and assurance to a man which will enable him to lead and win other men. You must have knowledge before imparting knowledge. You must have fire to kindle fire. You must have life to reproduce life. You must know Jesus and be on friendly terms with Him to be able to introduce others to Him. You must be

one with Jesus, and be "bound up in the bundle of life" with Him if you would bring others into that life.

Peter had repented under the preaching of John the Baptist, had forsaken all to follow Jesus, and had waited with prayer and unquenchable desire until he had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, and had been anointed with power from on high, before he became the fearless, mighty preacher who won 3,000 converts in a day.

Paul was mightily converted on the road to Damascus, and heard the voice of Jesus tell him what to do, and was baptized with the Holy Ghost under the teaching of Ananias before he became the apostle of quenchless zeal who turned the world upside down

Luther was definitely converted and justified by faith on the stairway of St. Peter's at Rome before he became the invincible reformer who could stand before popes and emperors and set captive nations free.

George Fox, Wesley, Finney, Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, William Taylor, James Caughey, Moody and General Booth, each and all had a definite personal experience that made them apostles of fire, prophets of God and saviours of men. They did not guess that they were saved, nor "hope" so. but they knew "whom they believed." and that they had passed from darkness into light and from the power of Satan unto God.

This experience was not evolution, but a revolution. No evolutionist ever has been or ever will be a great soul-winner. It is not by growth that men become such, but by revelation. It is not until God bursts through the veil and reveals Himself in their hearts through faith in His dear Son. and gives a consciousness of personal acceptance with Him, and sheds abroad His love in the heart, destroying unbelief, burning away sin, consuming selfishness, and filling the soul with the passion that filled the heart of Jesus, that men become soul-winners.

The experience that makes a man a soul-winner is twofold. First, he must know his sins forgiven; he must have recognized himself a sinner, out of friendly relation with God, and careless of God's claim, heedless of God's feelings, selfishly seeking his own way in spite of divine love and compassion, and heedless of the awful consequences of separating himself from God and this must have led to repentance toward God, by which I mean sorrow for and an utter

turning away from sin, followed by a confiding trust in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He must have so believed as to bring a restful consciousness that for Christ's sake his sins have been forgiven and that he has been adopted into God's family and made one of His dear children. This consciousness results from what Paul calls "the witness of the Spirit," and enables the soul to cry out in deep filial confidence and affection, "Abba Father." Second: He must be sanctified; he must know that his heart is cleansed, that pride and self-will and carnal ambition and strife and sensitiveness and suspicion and unbelief and every unholy temper are destroyed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost—personal Pentecost—and the in coming of a great love for, and loyalty to, Jesus Christ, before he can be largely used to win souls.

It must be a constant experience

People who frequently meet defeat and fail of victory in their own souls will not be largely successful in winning men to Jesus. The very consciousness of defeat makes them uncertain in their exhortation, doubtful and wavering in their testimony, and weak in their faith, and this will not be likely to produce conviction and beget faith in their hearers

Dr. Asa Mahan lived in the enjoyment of full salvation for over fifty years, and only once felt a slight uprising of temper. Finney, Wesley, Fletcher and Bramwell, like Enoch, walked

with God, and so walked "in the power of the Spirit" constantly, and were soul-winners all their lives, even to old age.

It must be a joyful experience

"The joy of the Lord is your strength," said Nehemiah. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation," prayed David. "I feel it my duty to be as happy as the Lord wants me to be," wrote McCheyne, the gifted and deeply spiritual young Scotch preacher, who was wonderfully successful in winning Souls.

"Oh, my soul is very happy! Bless God! I feel He is with me," cried Caughey, while preaching his sermon on "The Striving of the Spirit" No wonder he won souls.

Whitefield and Bramwell, two of the greatest soul-winners the world ever saw, were at times in almost an ecstasy of joy, especially when preaching, and this was as it should be.

John Bunyan tells us how he wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress" in his filthy Bedford dungeon. He says, "So I was led home to prison, and I sat me down and wrote and wrote because joy did make me write." Hallelujah!

God wants His people to be full of joy. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." said Jesus. (John 15:11.) And again He said, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:24.) "And these things write we unto you that your joy might be full," wrote

John. (1 John 1:4) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," wrote Paul, and again he writes, "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." "Joy in the Holy Ghost" is an oceanic current that flows unbroken through the holy, believing soul, though surrounded by seas of trouble and compassed about by infirmities and afflictions and sorrows.

We have thought of Jesus as "the Man of Sorrows" until we overlook His fullness of exultant joy. (Luke 10:21; John 15:11)

Joy can be cultivated and should be, as is faith or any other fruit of the Spirit:

1. By appropriating by faith the words that were spoken and written for the express purpose of giving us full-

ness of joy. "Now the God of hope will fill you with all joy and peace in believing," Wrote Paul to the Romans. It is by believing.

2. By meditating on these words and holding them in our minds and hearts until we have gotten all the sweetness out of them as we would hold honey in our mouths.
3. By exercise, even as faith or love or patience is exercised. This we do by rejoicing in the Lord and praising God for His goodness and mercy, and shouting when the joy wells up in our souls under the pressure of the Holy Spirit. Many people quench the Spirit of joy and praise, and so gradually lose it. But let

them repent, confess, pray and believe and then begin to praise God again and He will see to it that they have something to praise Him for, and their joy will convict sinners and prove a mighty means of winning them to Jesus.

Who can estimate the power there must have been in the joy that filled the heart of Peter and surged through the souls and beamed on the faces and flashed from the eyes of the one hundred and twenty fire-baptized disciples, while he preached that Pentecostal sermon which won three thousand bigoted enemies to the cross of a crucified Christ?

O Lord, still "make Thy ministers a flame of fire," and flood the world with Thy mighty joy! □