

Conversion Is a Miracle

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the miracle of conversion, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of soul winning.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 43:19, Luke 15:7, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Salvation Testimony"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches about the transformative power of God in the lives of those who turn from sin to Christ, emphasizing that it is the work of the Holy Spirit that changes individuals. He highlights the importance of every Christian being a soul winner, sharing stories of men and women who have been brought to Christ, inspiring others to seek the lost and share the message of salvation. The testimonies shared include powerful accounts of redemption from alcoholism, crime, and despair, showcasing the miraculous work of God in completely transforming lives and bringing hope and joy where there was once darkness.

Transcript

When one turns from sin to Christ and thus becomes a new creature, it is entirely the work of God. He must feel a sense of his need and appreciate the power of the Saviour, but it is the power of the Holy Spirit of God that transforms him. The stories of men and women who have been brought to Christ are always thrilling.

Every Christian ought to be a soul winner, and however many other obligations may rest upon him, the obligation of introducing others to Jesus Christ is of the first importance. If our lives are right; if we are wholly submitted to Him; if we are quick to do His bidding; if we have a familiarity with the Scriptures; if we have a confidence in the willingness of God to save; then we are emboldened to seek the lost and turn to those who are furthest away from Christ.

To know that others have been won to Him is always an inspiration. Recently in one of our meetings in New York, the Salvation Army forces came to assist us, and they brought with them some men and women whose stories of conversion were truly remarkable. In quick succession they appeared before an audience of several thousand.

The first speaker modestly began by saying: "What I am this afternoon, I am by the grace of God. For years and years I had been nothing but an every-day drunkard. Not far from where the Salvation Army

held their open air meetings was an old lamp post. One Sunday afternoon I heard their music and their singing, and I made my way to this lamp post. If it had not been there I believe I would never have been saved, for I was so intoxicated I could not stand.

"After the meeting was over one of the sisters came to me and said, 'My brother, wont you come along to the meeting? You need salvation.' 'Yes,' I said, 'I need something better than what I have got.' At the same time I did not go--I finished up the day in the saloon. I came out into the open air again and the devil said, 'You cannot mix with these people they are too far above you.' By and by there came a man who said he had been every bit as bad as I was, and he told me how his life had been changed. And my eyes were opened then and there, and I kept going to the meetings and I got some decent clothes, and a home of my own--though I had been working every day I had not a home to go to--but when I was converted all became changed. And now I am perfectly happy. My life is completely made over. I never think of drink and have no desire for it. I have a happy home and a "little lump of glory" for a wife.

"When I first became a Christian the devil said to me, 'You cannot stay there with those people, there is a whisky bill you have not yet paid. Suppose you are out in one of those open air meetings and the saloon keeper should see you and say, 'Why, he owes me six dollars,' what could you say then?' I went to that saloon keeper and said to him, 'How much do I owe you?' And he said, 'Six dollars.' 'Well,' I said, 'I want to pay it.' I did pay it then and there, and glory to God He has kept me from then to this day."

The next testimony was that of a former anarchist. Before he was converted he did not have a shirt to his back. He is now a business man in New York City, and prosperous.

"It was about eighteen years ago that I was with a group of men in a back street attending a meeting of anarchists, when the police came along and broke up the meeting. I made off as fast as I could, but I did not get away fast enough, for the police officer caught me by the arm and took me away to prison. While I was there the Salvation Army came to preach to us. Thank God for that night! It was the first time I had heard salvation preached, for I come from the stock of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When I got out of goal I went to the Salvation Army. There stood on the platform that night two girls. They told me about Jesus. They spoke of salvation for the drunkard, but that did not appeal to me; they spoke of salvation for the unbeliever, but that did not appeal to me; and when they spoke of salvation for the thief, neither did that appeal to me. Then one night they said salvation is for the Jew. I said to myself, 'That means me.' I came forward that night and got rid of my wretchedness and my misery; I came for salvation, and the Jew got salvation.'

"I moved away from the Bowery, for that was where I spent most of my time. I have walked down the Bowery many a night with not a place to lie down in, with not fifteen cents to pay for a bed, and not a shirt to my back. Thank God, I moved away from the Bowery. I started in business myself. To-day I have a splendid business connected with twenty houses on Broadway. Hallelujah! Godlessness, sin, vice, takes a man off Broadway and puts him on the Bowery; salvation takes a man from the Bowery and puts him on Broadway."

In the year 1880, the second convert in the Salvation Army in the United States was made, and after years of testing he came before us to speak as follows: "I started to drink when about thirteen years of age, and I kept drinking till the Salvation Army came to New York in 1880. I read in the papers about seven sisters coming over to open up the forces in the United States. There used to be an old lady who came to our house to see my mother. She was a Methodist, and my mother was also a Methodist. She used to come

there like an old grandmother and darn stockings. One day she said she would like to go to the Salvation Army, and asked me to take her. I was leading such a dissipated and drunken life, that I had no money to pay the car fare, but she slipped ten cents into my hand and we went to the Salvation Army that night. She was very deaf and got me away up to the front. The Spirit of God took hold of me, and the Salvation Army people, in the way they have, got after me. One of the officers came up and said, 'Are you saved?' I said, 'No, I could not be saved.' I managed to get out of the meeting that night without giving my heart to God. But all the time there was something taking hold of me. I tried to drown it in drink. On Sunday night with the old lady I was back at the Army again. On Monday night I was drunk again. On Tuesday night I knelt down and gave my heart to Jesus, and a Salvationist said, 'Now brother, if you want the Lord to do anything, you just tell Him.'

"Before that time I had served two terms in the penitentiary. Sometimes twice a week I would be brought into the Police Court for drunkenness. Every time I went out and got drunk I would get arrested. I tried to get away from this life and went out West. I thought if I got out there and got into new surroundings things would be different. I got as far as Hornsville, New York, and got arrested there. I got a little further West and was arrested again. But I never got rid of the kind of life I used to live until I came to the Lord Jesus Christ. That was thirty years ago. The Lord is not only able to save a man but, thank God, He is able to keep him."

This is the story of an English baronet. He went wrong in England, came to America as a cow boy, was wild and reckless, but was soundly converted. He said: "I will not say much about myself. Perhaps you already know something about me. You may have seen my picture in the papers, telling of my past life, but I want to try to tell you, to the glory of God, how I was born again.

"When I succeeded my father to one of the oldest titles in England, in the year 1907, I was wild and reckless. I came over to America. To escape from a wild scrape I beat the sheriff in Colorado into Utah. Then I went home to England in 1908 and took over the title of the estate, and I made the occasion simply one drunken spree. I was out for all the devilment I could get into. I hated the Church. I hated religion. I hated anything good. When I went down to the old church which is in the grounds of the estate, they said to me, 'What will you do about the minister?' I said, 'I would kick the fool out, but the law would make me put in another.' If anybody mentioned the Salvation Army to me, I would refer to them as thieves and liars.

"I came back to America and immediately got involved in some more sprees, such as driving horses into saloons, and other devilment. Then I crossed again to London and started a wild-west show of my own in the London Hippodrome. I came back to America deeper in sin than ever. One day I was sitting in a saloon planning a fresh escapade when a Salvation Army sister came in with her tambourine and some 'War Cries.' She looked at me and said, 'Are you a Christian?' I said, 'No.' She gave me the address of the Headquarters and asked me to come up. The bar-tender turned round and said, 'Go up and rope somebody.' I said, 'I will go up.' There was something different about me. I did not know what was wrong with myself I went up to the open-air meeting and was as quiet as a mouse. For five or six days I could not keep away from the Headquarters. I did not know what was wrong. I went out to see some moving pictures to see if I could see myself amongst them; then I went and had another drink; but back to the Salvation Army Headquarters I had to go. I was getting almost crazy. I reached the point when I had either to give in or kill myself.

"I locked the door of my room and then got down on my knees and asked God to forgive me. Do you know, it seemed as if hell was turned loose around me. Everything said, 'You have gone too far; you are

too big a sinner,' I said, 'But Jesus died for me.' I prayed and prayed, and I heard that voice come and say, 'Go and sin no more,' It was just as if a finger had touched my soul. My prayer turned from one of supplication to one of thankfulness for what God had done for me. I was born again. I rose up with the old life gone, and my two greatest blessings are that all that old life is blotted out for ever, and that I have the knowledge that the Spirit of Jesus my Saviour is in me, and I dwell in Him. The union between us is perfect. I thank God for that."

The following story was told by a man who had been a successful lawyer. He had gone down into the depths of sin and by the power of God's grace had been redeemed. He began by saying:--

Must Jesus bear the Cross alone, And all the world go free? No, there's a cross for you to bear, And there's a cross for me.

"It is a cross for me to come here and relate my experience, but I am glad to be here inasmuch as something I say may gladden someone who is discouraged. I was brought up in a Christian home. My mother was a good woman and my father was a clergyman. I went through college and the lower school before I took a single drop of strong drink. But when I took my first drink--I remember it well--it seemed to be something I had been looking for all my life and had never found before. From that time on I drank periodically. I had a lovely family and an honoured name, but I dragged it and my family into the dust. I struggled through my own strength to redeem myself, but I could not, nor can any man. I took cures, but they availed me not. I was in the hospital fourteen times, struggling up all the time, but falling down again. I seemed too hopeless. The light seemed to be fading for ever from the horizon, and darkness was coming over me. I was without hope. I would rather have fallen asleep in death, away from my companions, away from my loved ones, and never have been seen again, than to have lived the way I was. But through the providence of God, and through a kind wife and sister, I am able to stand here to-day. God bless the wives of the drunkards and drinking men, for if any will have a crown in heaven, it will be the wife of the drunkard who stands by him through thick and thin and who never gives him up.

"I went away to a certain town and while there I noticed the title of a book called 'Twice Born Men.' It aroused my curiosity, and I picked it up and commenced to read it. I came to the story of the puncher, a man who was formerly a prize fighter, and who had descended to the lowest scale of humanity. He had become a drunkard of the worst type and had gone one night into a saloon with murder in his heart. He was going home to kill his wife, when there flashed in upon him some strange influence, some mighty influence, some compelling influence--the power of the Almighty--and drove him into the Salvation Army barracks, and there he knelt at the Penitent form and God took the load from his back. When he rose up there was a new light in his eyes, a new heart in his breast, and he arose a new born man. He began to work for Christ.

"As I read that story I said, 'If there is hope for the puncher, there is hope for me.' I had been brought up a Christian, and during my drinking days I had attended church, and I had fought as every poor drunkard fights to redeem himself. But through my own strength I failed, and I want to say to you here, there is no man who suffers pangs of bitter conscience or from a broken heart more than a poor drunkard who cannot tear the chains from himself. Have pity on him. And I read about this man going out to save those who were lost, and then I read on further about Danny, a drunkard, who while in prison was visited by the puncher, who sought him out, and said, 'There is a better life for you.' He took him to his home, and it was a new and happy home he took him to, with a happy wife and children, and he laboured with them. Danny the thief; Danny the drunkard; Danny the murderer. When the day had passed Danny went back to prison.

But the power of God came over Danny in prison, and he said to himself, 'If God can save the puncher, God can save me.' And then there came into his heart a light; and I said, 'If God can save the puncher; if God can save Danny--He can save me.' And He did save me, and He has kept me, and from that day to this I have never desired a drop of alcohol.

"I have gone through physical sufferings that are attendant upon it, but thanks be unto God through the Lord Jesus Christ, He gave me the victory, and I stand here to-day an example of the keeping power of God. Oh, my friends, what a new life it opened up for me. I thought I was a Christian once; but until I was thrown down, until I was crucified twice over, not until then could I be convinced that God could save me from this terrible curse. And I want to say that no Christian man ever came to me and told me that God could save me from wrong. Oh, what a duty rests upon Christians to speak to the drinking men! When God took me by the hand I had a new life and I wanted to go out and save drunkards, and I have been trying to save them since. I went to the Salvation Army Barracks in Jersey City, and if it was not for the Salvation Army, I do not know whether I could have held out or not, but when I felt distressed those brothers prayed and stood round me, and if there is anyone here who is discouraged, and who is away from God, and who goes round the corner to see his little children going to school because he cannot go home, if there is anyone who has left a broken-hearted mother or wife at home; get up and go home to them and give your heart to the Lord."

The last story told at the meeting has to do with the complete transformation of a woman's life. It is a modern miracle. The one who tells the story is growing old and feeble, but all are thrilled as they listen to her.

This woman was educated in a young ladies' seminary, and had a fairly good start in life among some of the leading people in Western New York. She married a man who became an habitual drunkard. She was sorely disappointed in him, and, little by little, she started to drink, till there came the time when she and her husband were possibly two of the worst drunkards the State had ever known. She had been in prison two hundred or more times. But now, up in the little town of Canandaigua where she lives, she is treasurer of the Salvation Army, and has been for fifteen years. She is respected by all who know her. Not only the people in the army, but the well-to-do people of the town all love and respect Mary Law.

Her husband was not converted until recently. She had been praying fifteen years for him, and one night she prayed specially for him, the last half hour of the meeting passed, the last twenty minutes, and then Charlie came.

"I thank God for what He did for me," she said. "Before the Salvation Army got hold of me, I was one of the worst drunkards in the state of New York. The first night they came I wanted to know what the Salvation Army was like. Just like any other old drunken sot, I wanted to know what the Salvation Army was going to be. So I walked out as far as the Police Station, and I said, 'Where is the Salvation Army going to be to-night?' 'Well,' said the police officer, 'it is going to be up at the Presbyterian Church, but I want to tell you one thing. If you go up there you will get run in,' I thought to myself for a moment, if I stay out I will get run in, so I might just as well go up there and get run in. I went up, and I suppose I was a terrible-looking object. I got into a corner near the door, so that if anything turned up I could get out. I had just one quarter in my purse when they came to take up the collection, and I put that quarter in. I believe if I had been outside I would have been run in. When I got outside I wanted that quarter for a bottle of whisky. I then went up to the Police Station. When the Police Justice saw me coming in he said, 'Where have you been to-night?' I said, 'Up to the Salvation Army meeting.' 'Well,' he said, 'let me give you a little bit of advice.

Keep right on going.'

"The first night they had their meeting in the hall I went to the penitent form, and the next night I got saved. That was over fifteen years ago. I have neither tasted nor handled one drop of intoxicating liquor from that day to this. I did not have a home fit for a dog to live in. I hardly ever knew what it was to be without a black eye. I have been pounded until I did not know where I was; until I was dazed. And when I came to, and saw where I was, I was lying on the floor and Charlie was lying on the bed with his dirty old clothes on, and if anybody has gone through hell, it is I. But I thank God to-day I have got just as good a husband as there is in the state of New York. I have just as comfortable a home as anybody could wish, and every dollar of it is paid for. Before that the saloons got the money, but I thank God to-day the saloons don't get any of my money.

"Charlie would get arrested, and when I saw him locked up, I would do something that would get me locked up too. We went in together and we came out together, We would not be out for long when back we would go again. If one went to the lock-up, the other went, and that is the way we carried on through life.

"An election campaign was being held many years ago, and Charlie went up the street to vote. He came home drunk. I suppose it was election whisky, but he brought some home, and we had a drink together. We went to bed on Tuesday night, and woke up intending to go to work the next day. I asked one of the neighbours what time it was, and she said it is almost night now, but where have you been for the last two or three days? We had gone to sleep on Tuesday night and did not wake up till Thursday night. I went back, and we took another drink that night, and did not wake up till Saturday night. If my life, sixteen years ago, was not hell upon earth, I do not know what you call hell.

"Just about the time when I first started out to serve God in Canandaigua, I was an outcast. Nobody cared for me. Nobody would notice me. When they saw me they would go out of their way to avoid me. Nobody wanted to come near me. But when I was drunk I thought I was about as good as they were, and sometimes I gave them a little of my mind, and that was the way I often got arrested. But to-day those very folks, who were my very worst enemies, who tried to hurt me and who did everything they could to injure me, are my very best friends. I have friends among the rich, and friends among the poor. They do not shun my home, they come and see me, and if I am sick some of the wealthy people come to see how I am getting along, and if I have everything I want. For all this I have to thank God and the Salvation Army.

"I have been kicked and knocked and pounded until I have been almost dead. Charlie did the kicking and the pounding, but I was as much to blame as he was. I was drunk and so was he, but I was never the one to go to the police officer and get a warrant out for my husband. If he pounded me until I could hardly breathe, and he happened to get arrested for it, I managed to get arrested too. I cannot tell you how many times we have been in jail in the little village of Elgin, and in the penitentiary too. But I would rather go back to the penitentiary to-day and spend my days there than to live again the life that I lived before I was converted. I thank God and the Salvation Army to-night that I do not have to carry black eyes, and that I can go home in peace.

"I have a nice comfortable home, and it is all paid for, and if it had not been for the Salvation Army coming to Canandaigua, I would have been in a drunkard's hell to-day. When the Army first came there, I was like a great many others. I wanted to see what the Salvation Army was like, and out of curiosity I went to a meeting. But I was too drunk to understand anything about it. The next night I went there quite sober, and I gave my heart to the Lord. That was seventeen years ago, and I thank God that since then I have tried to

do my utmost to serve Him to the best of my ability. And it is my determination, as long as He gives me breath, to do for Him all I can, to spread His Kingdom on earth."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-wilbur-chapman/conversion-is-a-miracle/>

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