

~Other Speakers S-Z: Billy Sunday:

INTRODUCTION

Modern to the last minute Sunday's methods may be, but his message is unmistakably the "Old-time religion." He believes his beliefs without a question. There is no twilight zone in his intellectual processes; no mental reservation in his preaching. He is sure that man is lost without Christ, and that only by the acceptance of the Saviour can fallen humanity find salvation. He is as sure of hell as of heaven, and for all modernized varieties of religion he has only vials of scorn.

In no single particular is Sunday's work more valuable than in its revelation of the power of positive conviction to attract and convert multitudes. The world wants faith. "Intolerant," cry the scholars of Sunday; but the hungry myriads accept him as their spiritual guide to peace, and joy, and righteousness. The world wants a religion with salvation in it; speculation does not interest the average man who seeks deliverance from sin in himself and in the world. He does not hope to be evolved into holiness; he wants to be redeemed.

"Modernists" sputter and fume and rail at Sunday and his work: but they cannot deny that he leads men and women into new lives of holiness, happiness and helpfulness. Churches are enlarged and righteousness is promoted, all by the old, blood-stained way of the Cross. The revivals which have followed the preaching of Evangelist Sunday are supplemental to the Book of the Acts. His theology is summed up in the words Peter used in referring to Jesus: "There is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

One of Sunday's favorite sayings is: "I don't know any more about theology than a jack-rabbit does about ping-pong, but I'm on the way to glory. That really does not fully express the evangelist's point. He was arguing that "theology bears the same relation to Christianity that botany does to flowers, or astronomy to the stars. Botany is rewritten, but the flowers remain the same. Theology changes (I have no objection to your new theology when it tries to make the truths of Christianity clearer), but Christianity abides. Nobody is kept out of heaven because he does not understand theology. It isn't theology that saves, but Christ; it is not the sawdust trail that saves, but Christ in the motive that makes you hit the trail.

The Sermon

"I believe the Bible is the word of God from cover to cover. I believe that the man who magnifies the word of God in his preaching is the man whom God will honor. Why do such names stand out on the pages of history as Wesley, Whitefield, Finney and Martin Luther? Because of their fearless denunciation of all sin, and because they preach Jesus Christ without fear or favor.

"But somebody says a revival is abnormal. You lie! Do you mean to tell me that the godless, card-playing conditions of the Church are normal? I say they are not, but it is the abnormal state. It is the sin-eaten, apathetic condition of the Church that is abnormal. It is the 'Dutch lunch' and beer party, card parties and the like, that are abnormal. I say that they lie when they say that a revival is an abnormal condition in the Church.

"What we need is the good old-time kind of revival that will cause you to love your neighbors, and quit talking about them. A revival that will make you pay your debts, and have family prayers. Get that kind and then you will see that a revival means a very different condition from what people believe it does.

"Christianity means a lot more than church membership. Many an old skin-flint is not fit for the balm of Gilead until you give him a fly blister and get after him with a currycomb. There are too many Sunday-school teachers who are godless card-players, beer, wine and champagne drinkers. No wonder the kids are going to the devil. No wonder your children grow up like cattle when you have no form of prayer in the home.",,

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SUNDAY

What does converted mean? It means completely changed. Converted is not synonymous with reformed. Reforms are from without-conversion from within. Conversion is a complete surrender to Jesus. It's a willingness to do what he wants you to do. Unless you have made a complete surrender and are doing his will it will avail you nothing if you've reformed a thousand times and have your name on fifty church records.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in your heart and confess him with your mouth and you will be saved. God is good. The plan of salvation is presented to you in two parts. Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. Many of you here probably do Believe. Why don't you confess? Now own up. The truth is that you have a yellow streak. Own up, business men, and business women, and all of you others. Isn't it so? Haven't you got a little

saffron? Brave old Elijah ran like a scared deer when he heard old Jezebel had said she would have his head, and he beat it. And he ran to Beersheba and lay down under a juniper tree and cried to the Lord to let him die. The Lord answered his prayer, but not in the way he expected. If he had let him die he would have died with nothing but the wind moaning through the trees as his funeral dirge. But the Lord had something better for Elijah. He had a chariot of fire and it swooped down and carried him into glory without his ever seeing death.

So he says he has something better for you--salvation if he can get you to see it. You've kept your church membership locked up. You've smiled at a smutty story. When God and the Church were scoffed at you never peeped, and when asked to stand up here you've sneaked out the back way and beat it. You're afraid and God despises a coward--a mutt. You cannot be converted by thinking so and sitting still.

Maybe you're a drunkard, an adulterer, a prostitute, a liar; won't admit you are lost; are proud. Maybe you're even proud you're not proud, and Jesus has a time of it.

Jesus said: "Come to me," not to the Church; to me, not to a creed; to me, not to a preacher; to me, not to an evangelist; to me, not to a priest; to me, not to a pope; "Come to me and I will give you rest." Faith in Jesus Christ saves you, not faith in the Church.

You can join church, pay your share of the preacher's salary, attend the services, teach Sunday school, return thanks and do everything that would apparently stamp you as a Christian--even pray--but you won't ever be a Christian until you do what God tells you to do.

That's the road, and that's the only one mapped out for you and for me. God treats all alike. He doesn't furnish one plan for the banker and another for the janitor who sweeps out the bank. He has the same plan for one that he has for another. It's the law--you may not approve of it, but that doesn't make any difference.

Salvation a Personal Matter

The first thing to remember about being saved is that salvation is a personal matter. "Seek ye the Lord"--that means every one must seek for himself. It won't do for the parent to seek for the children; it won't do for the children to seek for the parent. If you were sick all the medicine I might take wouldn't do you any good. Salvation is a personal matter that no one else can do for you; you must attend to it yourself.

Some persons have lived manly or womanly lives, and they lack but one thing--open confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some men think that they must come to him in a certain way--that they must be stirred by emotion or something like that.

Some people have a deeper conviction of sin before they are converted than after they are converted. With some it is the other way. Some know when they are converted and others don't.

Some people are emotional. Some are demonstrative. Some will cry easily. Some are cold and can't be moved to emotion. A man jumped up in a meeting and asked whether he could be saved when he hadn't shed a tear in forty years. Even as he spoke he began to shed tears. It's all a matter of how you're constituted. I am vehement, and I serve God with the same vehemence that I served the devil when I went down the line.

Some of you say that in order to accept Jesus you must have different surroundings. You think you could do it better in some other place. You can be saved where you are as well as any place on earth. I say, "My watch doesn't run. It needs new surroundings. I'll put it in this other pocket, or I'll put it here, or here on these flowers." It doesn't need new surroundings. It needs a new mainspring; and that's what the sinner needs. You need a new heart, not a new suit.

What can I do to keep out of hell? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

The Philippian jailer was converted. He had put the disciples into the stocks when they came to the prison, but after his conversion he stooped down and washed the blood from their stripes.

Now, leave God out of the proposition for a minute. Never mind about the new birth--that's his business. Jesus Christ became a man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. He died on the cross for us, so that we might escape the penalty pronounced on us. Now, never mind about anything but our part in salvation. Here it is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

You say, "Mr. Sunday, the Church is full of hypocrites." So's hell. I say to you if you don't want to go to hell and

live with that whole bunch forever, come into the Church, where you won't have to associate with them very long. There are no hypocrites in heaven.

You say, "Mr. Sunday, I can be a Christian and go to heaven without joining a church." Yes, and you can go to Europe without getting on board a steamer. The swimming's good--but the sharks are laying for fellows who take that route. I don't believe you. If a man is truly saved he will hunt for a church right away.

You say, "It's so mysterious. I don't understand." You'll be surprised to find out how little you know. You plant a seed in the ground--that's your part. You don't understand how it grows. How God makes that seed grow is mysterious to you.

Some people think that they can't be converted unless they go down on their knees in the straw at a camp-meeting, unless they pray all hours of the night, and all nights of the week, while some old brother storms heaven in prayer. Some think a man must lose sleep, must come down the aisle with a haggard look, and he must froth at the mouth and dance and shout. Some get it that way, and they don't think that the work I do is genuine unless conversions are made in the same way that they have got religion.

I want you to see what God put in black and white; that there can be a sound, thorough conversion in an instant; that man can be converted as quietly as the coming of day and never backslide. I do not find fault with the way other people get religion. What I want and preach is the fact that a man can be converted without any fuss.

If a man wants to shout and clap his hands in joy over his wife's conversion, or if a wife wants to cry when her husband is converted, I am not going to turn the hose on them, or put them in a strait-jacket. When a man turns to God truly in conversion, I don't care what form his conversion takes. I wasn't converted that way, but I do not rush around and say, with gall and bitterness, that you are not saved because you did not get religion the way I did. If we all got religion in the same way, the devil might go to sleep with a regular Rip Van Winkle snooze and still be on the job.

Look at Nicodemus. You could never get a man with the temperament of Nicodemus near a camp meeting, to kneel down in the straw, or to shout and sing. He was a quiet, thoughtful, honest, sincere and cautious man. He wanted to know the truth and he was willing to walk in the light when he found it.

Look at the man at the pool of Bethesda. He was a big sinner and was in a lot of trouble which his sins had made for him. He had been in that condition for a long time. It didn't take him three minutes to say "Yes," when the Lord spoke to him. See how quietly he was converted.

"And He Arose and Followed Him"!

Matthew stood in the presence of Christ and he realized what it would be to be without Christ, to be without hope, and it brought him to a quick decision. "And he arose and followed him."

How long did that conversion take? How long did it take him to accept Christ after he had made up his mind? And you tell me you can't make an instant decision to please God? The decision of Matthew proves that you can. While he was sitting at his desk he was not a disciple. The instant he arose he was. That move changed his attitude toward God. Then he ceased to do evil and commenced to do good. You can be converted just as quickly as Matthew was.

God says: "Let the wicked man forsake his way." The instant that is done, no matter if the man has been a life-long sinner, he is safe. There is no need of struggling for hours--or for days--do it now. Who are you struggling with? Not God. God's mind was made up long before the foundations of the earth were laid. The plan of salvation was made long before there was any sin in the world. Electricity existed long before there was any car wheel for it to drive. "Let the wicked man forsake his way." When? Within a month, within a week, within a day, within an hour? No! Now! The instant you yield, God's plan of salvation is thrown into gear. You will be saved before you know it, like a child being born.

Rising and following Christ switched Matthew from the broad to the narrow way. He must have counted the cost as he would have balanced his cash book. He put one side against the other. The life he was living led to all chance of gain. On the other side there was Jesus, and Jesus outweighs all else. He saw the balance turn as the tide of a battle turns and then it ended with his decision. The sinner died and the disciple was born.

I believe that the reason the story of Matthew was written was to show how a man could be converted quickly and quietly. It didn't take him five or ten years to begin to do something--he got busy right away.

You don't believe in quick conversions? There have been a dozen men of modern times who have been powers for God whose conversion was as quiet as Matthew's. Charles G. Finney never went to a camp meeting. He was out in the woods alone, praying, when he was converted. Sam Jones, a mighty man of God, was converted at the bedside of his dying father. Moody accepted Christ while waiting on a customer in a boot and shoe store. Dr. Chapman was converted as a boy in a Sunday school. All the other boys in the class had accepted Christ, and only Wilbur remained. The teacher turned to him and said, "And how about you, Wilbur?" He said, "I will," and he turned to Christ and has been one of his most powerful evangelists for many years. Gipsy Smith was converted in his father's tent. Torrey was an agnostic, and in comparing agnosticism, infidelity and Christianity, he found the scale tipped toward Christ. Luther was converted as he crawled up a flight of stairs in Rome.

Seemingly the men who have moved the world for Christ have been converted in a quiet manner. The way to judge a tree is by its fruit. Judge a tree of quiet conversion in this way.

Another lesson. When conversion compels people to forsake their previous calling, God gives them a better job. Luke said, "He left all." Little did he dream that his influence would be world-reaching and eternity-covering. His position as tax-collector seemed like a big job, but it was picking up pins compared to the job God gave him. Some of you may be holding back for fear of being put out of your job. If you do right God will see that you do not suffer. He has given plenty of promises, and if you plant your feet on them you can defy the poor-house. Trust in the Lord means that God will feed you. Following Christ you may discover a gold mine of ability that you never dreamed of possessing. There was a saloon-keeper, converted in a meeting at New Castle, who won hundreds of people to Christ by his testimony and his preaching.

You do not need to be in the church before the voice comes to you; you don't need to be reading the Bible; you don't need to be rich or poor or learned. Wherever Christ comes follow. You may be converted while engaged in your daily business. Men cannot put up a wall and keep Jesus away. The still small voice will find you.

At the Cross-roads

Right where the two roads through life diverge God has put Calvary. There he put up a cross, the stumbling block over which the love of God said, "I'll touch the heart of man with the thought of father and son." He thought that would win the world to him, but for nineteen hundred years men have climbed the Mount of Calvary and trampled into the earth the tenderest teachings of God.

You are on the devil's side. How are you going to cross over?

So you cross the line and God won't issue any extradition papers. Some of you want to cross. If you believe, then say so, and step across. I'll bet there are hundreds that are on the edge of the line and many are standing straddling it. But that won't save you. You believe in your heart--confess him with your mouth. With his heart man believes and with his mouth he confesses. Then confess and receive salvation full, free, perfect and external. God will not grant any extradition papers. Get over the old line. A man isn't a soldier because he wears a uniform, or carries a gun, or carries a canteen. He is a soldier when he makes a definite enlistment. All of the others can be bought without enlisting. When a man becomes a soldier he goes out on muster day and takes an oath to defend his country. It's the oath that makes him a soldier. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile, but public definite enlistment for Christ makes you a Christian.

"Oh," a woman said to me out in Iowa, "Mr. Sunday, I don't think I have to confess with my mouth." I said: "You're putting up your thought against God's."

M-o-u-t-h doesn't spell intellect. It spells mouth and you must confess with your mouth. The mouth is the biggest part about most people, anyhow.

What must I do?

Philosophy doesn't answer it. Infidelity doesn't answer it. First, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Believe on the, Lord. Lord--that's his kingly name. That's the name he reigns under. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." It takes that kind of a confession. Give me a Saviour with a sympathetic eye to watch me so I shall not slander. Give me a Saviour with a strong arm to catch me if I stumble. Give me a Saviour that will hear my slightest moan.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Christ is his resurrection name. He is sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for us.

Because of his divinity he understands God's side of it and because of his humanity he understands our side of it. Who is better qualified to be the mediator? He's a mediator. What is that? A lawyer is a mediator between the jury and the defendant. A retail merchant is a mediator between the wholesale dealer and the consumer. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man. Believe on the Lord. He's ruling today. Believe on the Lord Jesus. He died to save us. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the Mediator.

Her majesty, Queen Victoria, was traveling in Scotland when a storm came up and she took refuge in a little hut of a Highlander. She stayed there for an hour and when she went the good wife said to her husband, "We'll tie a ribbon on that chair because her majesty has sat on it and no one else will ever sit on it." A friend of mine was there later and was going to sit in the chair when the man cried: "Nae, nae, mon. Dinna sit there. Her majesty spent an hour with us once and she sat on that chair and we tied a ribbon on it and no one else will ever sit on it." They were honored that her majesty had spent the hour with them. It brought unspeakable joy to them.

It's great that Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of my heart, not for an hour, but here to sway his power forever and ever.

"He Died for Me"

In the war there was a band of guerillas--Quantrell's band--that had been ordered to be shot on sight. They had burned a town in Iowa and they had been caught. One long ditch was dug and they were lined up in front of it and blindfolded and tied, and just as the firing squad was ready to present arms a young man dashed through the bushes and cried, "Stop!" He told the commander of the firing squad that he was as guilty as any of the others, but he had escaped and had come of his own free will, and pointed to one man in the line and asked to take his place. "I'm single," he said, "while he has a wife and babies." The commander of that firing squad was an usher in one of the cities in which I held meetings, and he told me how the young fellow was blindfolded and bound and the guns rang out and he fell dead.

Time went on and one day a man came upon another in a graveyard in Missouri weeping and shaping the grave into form. The first man asked who was buried there and the other said, "The best friend I ever had." Then he told how he had not gone far away but had come back and got the body of his friend after he had been shot and buried it; so he knew he had the right body. And he had brought a withered bouquet all the way from his home to put on the grave. He was poor then and could not afford anything costly, but he had placed a slab of wood on the pliable earth with these words on it: "He died for me."

Major Whittle stood by the grave some time later and saw the same monument. If you go there now you will see something different. The man became rich and today there is a marble monument fifteen feet high and on it this inscription:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF WILLE LEE
HE TOOK MY PLACE IN THE LINE
HE DIED FOR ME

Sacred to the memory of Jesus Christ. He took our place on the cross and gave his life that we might live, and go to heaven and reign with him.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, confess him with thy mouth, and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

It is a great salvation that can reach down into the quagmire of filth, pull a young man out and send him out to hunt his mother and fill her days with sunshine. It is a great salvation, for it saves from great sin.

The way to salvation is not Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Vassar or Wellesley. Environment and culture can't put you into heaven without you accept Jesus Christ.

It's great. I want to tell you that the way to heaven is a blood-stained way. No man has ever reached it without Jesus Christ and he never will.