

**Articles and Sermons :: Conversion of Oswald J Smith (R.A. Torrey)****Conversion of Oswald J Smith (R.A. Torrey) - posted by ArthurRosh, on: 2013/1/22 8:56**

Oswald Jeffrey Smith (1889–1986) was born in a farmhouse on the outskirts of Odessa in Ontario Canada in 1889. His father, Benjamin Smith, worked as a railway telegrapher at the railroad station. Oswald was the eldest, among his siblings of six brothers and four sisters. Since Odessa was a remote countryside village, Oswald spent his younger years between school, the railroad station, and Sunday school in the town.

At that time R.A. Torrey held an evangelistic crusade in Toronto in January 1906. Every night of the conference, the Massey Hall was filled with 3,000 people, who were gathered to hear the sermons of Torrey. The newspapers even reported the event in detail, with a daily article introducing the whole text of the sermon message presented by Torrey each night. The articles continually sparked fire among the residents of the Toronto area, convincing them to return the next night.

The articles about Torrey's sermons and news of the conference also reached the household of Oswald J. Smith, which was 90 miles away from Toronto. Somehow, he strangely felt a strong desire to attend the conference after reading the articles. Not that he ever attended such a conference of that magnitude before, for that matter. However, his younger brother Ernie also felt the same jolt.

Those two received permission to attend the conference from their mother, and went to Toronto by train. With the help of their aunt Phoebe, who was living in Toronto, they got on a street car and went to Massey Hall. When they got off the street car, their eyes became wide opened at the sight. There was an enormous amount of people already gathered outside, waiting for the entrance gate to open, even though the conference was still an hour from starting. The two brothers tried to elbow through the people, pushing people to stand a little bit in front, but it was of no use. There were stronger and bigger adults surrounding them. Somehow, they became stuck between the adults with no space to move even a little bit. With such a position locking them up, some time had gone by. Finally, the entrance gate was opened.

Just like marathoners waiting for the gun to be shot at the starting line, the crowd yelled and tried to move up to the front as they swarmed into the entrance gate.

Just like a ham in a sandwich, Oswald and Ernie were swept from their feet and were moving towards the entrance gate without any effort. They were already in the building before they knew it. It seemed as though they had been swept by a current without touching the ground.

Oswald felt strange. For 16 years, he had been living in the countryside and this was the first time he visited the big city. It was the first time that he ever entered into a three-story building as big as Massey Hall. But that surprise was nothing compared to his continued surprises afterwards. Having been overwhelmed by the magnitude of the building, and the massive crowd, these two country kids could not even dare sit up in front, but sat by the corner of the balcony.

At last, the conference started by praises sung by Alexander. Alexander was the successor of Ira D. Sankey, who sang praises for Bible crusades accompanying D. L. Moody. His praises were like stones thrown into a lake causing ripples. The songs calmly spread through the hearts of the audience with a wave of inspiration.

"It was far away from home, but I think it was good that we came here. I wish he sang one more song."

The hall was filled with the roar and clapping of a yearning sound. Torrey's sermon followed immediately after the praises. From the book of Isaiah, Torrey conveyed messages that came from the heart of God, who wanted to give forgiveness of sin to mankind through Jesus.

"If I knew this sooner, I would have brought my parents, brothers and sisters. Now only eight hours remains for this conference. What should I do? For now, we should at least concentrate and listen to the sermon. I should not let a single word pass by."

The two brothers did not exchange any words with each other, but thought the same thing as though they had made a pact.

While listening to Pastor Torrey's sermon, Oswald and Ernie felt a new heart developing inside of them that they knew not before.

"Ozzie, what did you think, while you listened to the pastor's sermon?"

"You say it first."

"Well, it seemed like I was being pulled toward Jesus without any of my means. And I don't know why that was happening."

"Did you also feel that? I also thought about that too, but I thought it would be great if I could give my whole life to Jesus."

"Oh really? I also thought the same."

They both deliberately thought about offering their lives to Jesus. The conference was filled with people continually. The accommodation size for Massey Hall was 3,000 people. However, since overflowing numbers came to the conference, the sponsors decided to divide the group, in order for them to progress the conference. One day, only "married men," and the next day only "married women."

On January 28, 1906, when the night service was over, only one hour of conference time remained. That day was set aside for boys and young men to enter. The hall was filled with a great number of people, and Pastor Torrey delivered the message of the gospel.

"Folks, let us all read Isaiah chapter 53, verses 5 to 6. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

That's right. Folks, we all have forsaken God, and His Word. However, God did not question any of that sin upon us, but onto Jesus. What was the reason for that? That is because Jesus the Savior has taken the sins of this world. He has set us free."

Oswald read the verses in Isaiah chapter 53 by changing the word from "our" to "my."

But he was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon him; and with his stripes I am healed. I am like sheep have gone astray; I have turned every thing to my own way; and the LORD hath laid on him all the iniquity of mine.

This Word had stirred the heart of Oswald.

"Because of the sin that I committed, Jesus who had no sin had to wear a thorny crown and receive stripes!" Oswald could not move at all. He became so startled that he felt his body turn hard, just like a huge lead ingot. At that time, somebody poked him on the side.

"Ozzie!"

"Yeh? What? What is it?"

"What are you doing? The sermon is over. Didn't you hear the pastor just telling people to come down whoever wants to receive prayer? Let's hurry up and go."

"He said that? Okay, let's go down."

The sermon ended while Oswald was pondering about the Word. Pastor Torrey held onto the people's hands, those who came there for the first time. The two boys, who sat by the balcony, hurriedly ran down the stairs and stood at the front of the line. Pastor Torrey held onto Oswald's hand and prayed for him. Then, he told Oswald to go down to the underground service room and have a counseling session with one of the ministers.

Oswald went down and met with the minister. The minister explained thoroughly how Jesus had accomplished salvation. Afterwards, he left the place leaving Oswald behind; maybe he thought that it was enough of an explanation about the gospel. But it seemed to Oswald there still were some questions lingering in his mind which were not resolved. It was at that time a new heart entered into him. It was a heart that he had not known before. Recollecting that time, Oswald speaks of that incident as follows:

“Then suddenly it happened. I cannot explain it even today. I just bowed my head, put my face between my hands and in a moment the tears gushed through my fingers and fell on the chair, and there stole into my boyish heart a realization of the fact that the great change had taken place. Christ had entered and I was a new creature. I had been born again. There was no excitement, no unusual feeling, but I knew that something had happened and that ever after all life would be different. It was the greatest event of my life.”

That evening in the heart of Oswald J. Smith, Jesus, who had forgiven all his sins, had entered. His name had been recorded in the book of life in heaven. It was January 28, 1906.

On his way home, Oswald had one prayer in his heart.  
“Lord, what do You wish for me to do in my life? What have You hid and prepared for my life after today?”

He read the Bible and prayed and desired for God to hold onto his life and guide it. At first, he prayed without any certainty. When a white paper that has no drawing gets into contact with an artist, art is born. Nevertheless, art cannot be accomplished in a single day. The artist thinks about what to draw on a blank white paper, and slowly outlines a picture with a pencil. Then, little by little, he would fill the outline with paint. The abstract image that was hidden inside the artist was beginning to materialize into a concrete form which we could identify. As such, while Oswald was praying, God had been drawing a picture in Oswald’s heart according to His plan. As the prayer continued that picture became clearer. God had been planting a love for the gospel into Oswald’s heart, little by little.

“It would be great if I could work on the things that God wishes. It would be fine to go all the way to the back country at the end of the earth to preach the gospel. It would also be a joy to clean the chapel. Although it may be worthless, difficult, and dirty work; if I could participate in the smallest part of the gospel that would be the most glorious thing ever.”

Oswald wanted to preach the gospel that was more than his life. From then on, by the help of his mother, he opened up a Sunday school. He sang hymns and sometimes by following the railroad track, he went to the neighboring town and gathered up Sunday school students and preached a sermon. In a tiny room, he would gather little children, and preach a sermon on top of a bed.

Of course, there were hardships on the way. In 1907, when he was 18 years old, he decided to go overseas as a missionary. He asked the Presbyterian Church to sponsor him as a missionary. But, he was rejected due to being too young. Instead, he carried a bag filled with either Bibles or witnessing papers to sell, traveling along the sea coast, mountain sides, back countries, or Indian villages. Still, it was all the same. When or wherever he would be, his main goal was to preach the gospel.

As he was touring various local churches to sell Bibles, he was given an opportunity to preach the gospel often. While delivering the message, Oswald received fame as a “preacher of conveying the heart of God.” By the request of the Bible Society in Vancouver, he went on a witnessing trip for six days riding on a train to Western Canada. In September 1908, he began his first ministry work at Prince Rupert Island. In 1921, for the first time, he established “The Alliance Tabernacle.” In September 1928, he established “The Cosmopolitan Tabernacle” and held his first service at Massey Hall. This place was where Oswald heard the gospel for the first time and received salvation. Therefore, his thanks toward God were greater for allowing him to stand on this blessed stage as a preacher.

The church continually grew and from the center of the Cosmopolitan Tabernacle Church, the gospel was powerfully witnessed in Toronto and its surrounding areas. In 1933, by the grace of God, Oswald Smith moved to “100 Bloor Street East” and founded the People’s Church. During Oswald Smith’s ministry, the People’s Church grew to become the largest church in Canada. He also established “the Back Home Hour” radio station, and preached the gospel. Furthermore, he held “annual missionary conference” to raise funds, yielding faith pledges of three hundred thousand dollars annually, totaling fourteen million dollars for the missionary offerings. He also trained missionaries and supported overseas missionaries.

Beside the people who were saved through the broadcast sermons, it is on the record that there were great revivals where 500 people were annually saved and added to the church. Oswald J. Smith was not bound by any denomination, but wished the gospel to be preached in any form. Therefore, he preached the gospel in many different ways, such as TV/radio broadcasts sermons, magazines, and hymns/poetry publications, distribution of audio tapes, slides, phonograph records, films, and witnessing booklets. God had given him those many duties. His humble beginning started by being colporteur, and then evangelist, pastor (his extensive 35 sermon books have been translated into 128 languages), missionary (from 1932 to 1980 he had traveled over 62 countries and preached the gospel), educator, publisher and editor for a publication, poet, composer, lyricist, and so many other forms, which are too many to count.

Especially, he wrote numerous beautiful poems and hymn lyrics praising God who saved him. All the lyrics to his poems and hymns are simple, and contain the hope of assurance of salvation that had come to his heart. He said, "People say I wrote 1,200 hymns, songs, and poems, down through the years of my ministry, but actually the Lord had enabled me to write all that."

Even 20 years after the death of Oswald J. Smith, we can find easily on the internet, his sermons and hymns through text and MP3 format. He was neither a professionally trained writer, nor some one who had a literary mind, or one filled with ability. He wrote more songs and poems at times when the church suffered various hardships. His songs and poems were not created at a desk or chamber, but were created by the Lord who had been walking by his side every moment of his life. He was born again on January 28, 1906, and until his death on January 25, 1986, for 80 years and 3 days, Oswald J. Smith lived a truly blessed life having walked with the Lord.

**Re: Conversion of Oswald J Smith (R.A. Torrey) - posted by rufnrust (), on: 2013/1/22 10:06**

My joy in reading this post is beyond words!!! Thank you for this article. To me Oswald Smith is the 'overlooked' Oswald. His book "The Cry of the World" left me undone and I have never recovered! May I never!!

Russell