

Tozer Speaks

128 Compelling and Authoritative Teachings of A.W. Tozer

VOLUME ONE

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Compiled by Gerald B. Smith

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CHAPTER

1

The New Birth: A Major Miracle of God's Grace

WHEN PETER WROTE, "BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," he arrived at a major miracle of the New Testament!

Now, I want to bear down, and pause, and walk around her bulwarks, and behold the gates and walls thereof—this major miracle we call "begotten again."

This, like a great many Bible teachings, has fallen into cold hands.

We feel as if we were in a mortuary instead of the church of the living God. Instead of a man just having come fresh out of the tomb, we feel as if we were in the presence of a corpse just brought in from the street.

This is what I mean: the words "born again" have become words that mean precious little.

I revolt from the use of the hyphenated adjective among us, when we say: "Yes, he's a born-again man." I revolt from it not because I don't believe it, but because I always shrink from hearing dead men talk about living subjects.

There isn't anything quite so chilling, quite so disheartening as a man without the Holy Spirit preaching about the Holy Spirit.

And I revolt from hearing the hyphenated adjective "born-again" tossed around lightly by people with their manufactured smiles, and just heading for the nearest restaurant!

Now, Peter talked about a major miracle, that is, being born again—begotten again!

I don't mind telling you that it is my earnest faith that all that is worthwhile in Christianity is a miracle.

The trappings and paraphernalia and outward dressings of Christianity are unnecessary—we could get along nicely without them.

But there is a series of miracles, throbbing and beating within the divine message of God, and within the hearts of those who believe truly—and that's about all there is to the Christian faith!

Supernatural grace has been the teaching of the Church from Pentecost to the present hour.

It is sad that some men are being forced from the churches in which they have preached because they have insisted upon preaching the supernatural quality of the acts of God.

This church is founded on it. We believe it.

We believe that pure religion is a continuous perpetuation of a major miracle, and we cannot settle for just the mental quality of things.

Now, mentality is here, and it's a part of us, and God redeems it, too.

But the new birth is a miracle, a major miracle. It is a vital and unique work of God in human nature.

It is the creating of a new man in the heart, where another man has been. It is the putting of a new man in the old man's place, and we are born anew!

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CHAPTER

1

The Apostolic Voice: The Wonder of Inspiration!

“. . . The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Peter 1:23, 25

THERE ARE CHRISTIANS AMONG us today who seem to feel that their spiritual lives would have been greatly helped if they could have had voice-to-voice and person-to-person counsel from our Lord or from the Apostle Peter or Paul.

I know it is fair to say that if one of the apostles or any of the great early fathers of the church could return to this world from their yesteryear, there would not be room to contain the crowds that would rush in.

If it were known that St. Augustine or Chrysostom or Francis of Assisi or Knox or Luther or any of the great who have lived were to be present to speak, we would all give our closest attention and listen as though we were hearing indeed a very word from God.

Under the circumstances, we cannot hope to hear from men of God who centuries ago completed their ministries and went to be with the Lord. The voices of the great saints and mighty

warriors of yesterday can no longer be heard in this twentieth century.

However, there is good news for those who are anxious to hear a word from the Lord! If we have a mind to listen, we may still "hear" the voice of an apostle for we are dealing with the words written by the man, Peter. He was indeed a great saint, even though we may not consider him the greatest of the apostles. I think it is safe to say that he was the second of the apostles, Paul alone, perhaps, having a higher place than the man, Peter.

So, as we look into his message, Peter will be speaking to us, even though it is through an "interpreter."

Often our missionaries have told us of difficult times they have had with interpreters. The expression of the missionary may go in one way and come out with a different sense to the hearer, and I think when we expound the scriptures, we are often guilty of being imperfect interpreters. I shall do the best I can to catch the spirit of the man, Peter, and to determine what God is trying to say to us and to reduce the interference to a minimum.

Now, I suppose more people would like me if I were to declare that I preach the Bible and nothing but the Bible. I attempt to do that, but honesty compels me to say that the best I can do is to preach the Bible as I understand it. I trust that through your prayers and the Spirit of Christ my understanding may be right. If you pray and if I yield and trust, perhaps what we get from First Peter will indeed be approximately what Peter would say if he were here in person. We will stay as close as we can to the Word of the Living God.

The man Peter had a reputation for being first because he was a most impetuous man. He was either the first or among the very first in almost everything that took place and that touched him while he was alive.

For this reason, I suppose that Peter would have made a wonderful American! He usually opened his mouth and talked before he thought and that is a characteristic of many of us. He rushed to do what he had to do—and that is also characteristic of us.

From the record of the Gospels, it appears that Peter may have been the first, or at least among the very first, to become a disciple of John the Baptist. He was among the first disciples who turned to Jesus when John the Baptist pointed and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

Peter was the first apostle called by our Lord to follow Him. I believe that Peter was the first convert for he was the first man to say, "Thou art the Son of the Living God,"

Peter was among the very first to see our Lord after He had risen from the dead. There are those who insist that Peter was the first, believing that the Lord Jesus appeared to no one else until after a meeting with His beloved friend, Peter.

Also, remember that Peter was the first of the New Testament preachers. It is quite in keeping with the temperament of this man that when the Holy Spirit had come at Pentecost and there was opportunity for someone to stand and speak the Truth, Peter should be the man to do it.

I think there is no profound theological reason back of this. I think it is a matter of temperament

and disposition. When 120 persons are suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and it falls to the lot of one of them to leap up and express the wonder of what has just happened, it would be normal for the man Peter to be the one. So, he got to his feet and poured out that great sermon recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Acts—the great sermon that converted 3,000 persons!

But Peter was a man, and in his early discipleship and ministry there were glaring contradictions and inconsistencies in his life. It is not possible for us to try to boast and say that this man, this second greatest of the apostles, never deviated one inch from the straight line from the moment of his conversion to the time of his death. I do believe in realism in religion and I do not think any good can come from hiding the bad and trying to reflect an unnatural righteousness which is not true to the whole character of the man.

Actually, I wish that every one of us could be like the angels or those strange creatures in the first chapter of Ezekiel, of whom it is said that when they went “they went every one straight forward.”

I do not know what that means precisely, but I do know that it is an intriguing test—when they went they went straight forward. I wish that from the time I was converted at the age of 17 I had gone straight forward; but I did not and most of us have not. We zigzag on our way to heaven in place of flying a straight course. I am sorry about this. I don't excuse it, but I try to understand it!

Well, Peter was a bundle of contradictions and I take the position that it further glorifies the grace of God that He could take a weak and vacillating