The Soul Winner

Charles H. Spurgeon

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How to Lead Sinners to the Savior

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Table of Contents

Preface
What Is It to Win a Soul?
Conviction of Sin
Qualifications for Soul Winning - Godward
Living Faith
Qualifications for Soul Winning – Manward
Holiness of Character
Kinds of Sermons Most Likely to Convert People
Take Out Everything Likely to Distract
Obstacles in Our Path as We Seek to Win Souls for Christ
How to Encourage Our People to Win Souls
Favorable Soul Winning Atmosphere
How to Raise the Dead
How to Win Souls for Christ
Be Examples
The Cost of Being a Soul Winner
Charles H. Spurgeon - A Brief Biography

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Preface

This book is published in accordance with a plan established by Charles H. Spurgeon. He had already prepared most of the material published here with the rest inserted after slight revisions. His intention was to provide a short course of lectures to the students of the Pastors' College regarding what he termed "that most royal employment" – SOUL WINNING. With the series completed, he planned to collect his previous lectures to other audiences on the same theme and publish the complete collection for the guidance of all who desired to become soul winners. He hoped this collection would encourage many more professing Christians to engage in this truly blessed service for the Savior.

The first six chapters in this book are based on college lectures followed by messages delivered to Sunday school teachers, open-air preachers, and friends gathered at Monday evening prayer-meetings at the Tabernacle. The rest of this book is a compilation of sermons in which the work of winning souls is earnestly commended to the care of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For more than forty years, Mr. Spurgeon, through his preaching and writing, was one of the greatest soul winners. By his printed words, he still continues to be a catalyst of action for the conversion of many all over the world. Therefore, it's believed thousands will rejoice to read what he spoke and wrote concerning what he called "the chief business of the Christian minister."

What Is It to Win a Soul?

Soul winning is the most important concern of the Christian minister. In fact, it should be the main pursuit of every true believer, Let us reckon men as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that each one be found faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). We should each say with Simon Peter, "I go fishing," and with Paul our aim should be, That I might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Chapter 1

What Is It to Win a Soul?

We will begin our discussions regarding this subject by considering the question: What is it to win a soul ?

This may be answered best by first describing what it is not. Soul winning is not accomplished by stealing members from already-established churches, just to train them to utter our peculiar pronunciation of Shibboleth (Judges 12:4-6). Instead, soul winning means bringing souls to Christ rather than making converts to our assembly.

Sheep-stealers beyond the walls of the church are not acting in a brotherly fashion. Concerning these, I will say nothing except that they are not brethren, and they must stand or fall before their own Master. However, we think it reveals an absolute lack of excellence of any kind to build up our own house with the ruins of our neighbors' mansions. Instead, we prefer to quarry for ourselves.

I hope we all identify with the large-hearted spirit of Dr. Chalmers when he was told that such and such an effort wouldn't be beneficial to the special interests of the Free Church of Scotland, although it might promote the general religion of the land. In response he said, "What is the Free Church compared with the Christian good of the people of Scotland?"

What, indeed, is any church? Or what are all the churches put together as mere organizations if they stand in conflict with the moral and spiritual advantage of the nation? Or if they impede the kingdom of Christ? It is because God blesses men through the churches that we desire to see them prosper and not merely for the sake of the churches themselves. Unfortunately, there's selfishness involved in our eagerness to enlarge our own number of people. May grace deliver us from this evil spirit. The increase of God's kingdom should be desired more than the growth of a sect.

It would be a great trade to make a Paedo-Baptist brother into a Baptist, because we value our Lord's ordinances. But rather, we should labor earnestly to raise a believer in salvation by free-will into a believer in salvation by grace, because we long to see all spiritual teaching built upon the solid rock of truth and not upon the sand of imagination. At the same time, our far-reaching objective isn't the revision of opinions but the regeneration of natures. We long to bring men to Christ and not to our own peculiar views of Christianity. Our first concern must be that the sheep are gathered to the great Shepherd. Afterwards, we will have enough time to secure them for our various folds. To make proselytes is a suitable labor for Pharisees, but to bring men to God is the honorable aim of ministers of Christ, And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. (Jude 1:23).

Next, we don't consider soul winning to be accomplished by hurriedly penning more names to our church-roll in order to show a good increase as a growing church at the end of the year. This is easily done and worth no more than the ink and paper used to record the roll. Yet, there are those who go through great pains using their skills to bring about such an outcome. However, if such tactics are to be regarded as the beginning and end of a minister's efforts, the result will be deplorable.

By all means let us bring true converts into the church, for it's a part of our work to teach

them to observe all things Christ has commanded. However, this is to be done to make true disciples and not Christians in word only. If we aren't careful to obey in this matter, we may do more harm than good at this point.

The church is the body of Christ and introducing unconverted persons into the church weakens and degrades it. For this reason, what seems to be an apparent gain numerically may be a real loss from God's point of view.

I'm not among those who criticize statistics, nor do I think they produce all manner of evil. As a tool, they do much good if they are accurate, and if men use them lawfully. It's a good thing for people to become aware, through statistics, of a decrease. So they see the true need and are driven to their knees before the Lord to seek prosperity. On the other hand, it's by no means an evil thing for workers to be encouraged by positive results set before them. I would be sorry if the practice of adding up, deducting, and giving the net result was to be abandoned, because it's good to be aware of our numerical condition.

As long as we're discussing the matter, it's worth noting that those who object to the statistical process are often the same people whose unsatisfactory reports should somewhat humiliate them. This isn't always the case, but it is suspiciously frequent. I heard the report on a church the other day, in which the minister, who was well known for dwindling his congregation to nothing, somewhat cleverly wrote, "Our church is looking up." When he was questioned about his statement, he replied, "Everybody knows that the church is on its back, and it can't do anything else but look up."

When churches are "looking up" in this fashion, their pastors generally say statistics are very misleading, and that you can't tabulate the work of the Spirit or calculate the prosperity of a church by figures. The fact is, if the figures are honest, you can calculate very correctly. If all circumstances are taken into consideration and there is no increase, you may gauge with considerable accuracy that there isn't much being done. If there is a clear decrease among a growing population, you may suppose that the prayers of the people and the preaching of the minister are not of the most powerful kind.

But, still, all manner of hurrying just to get members into the church is most harmful, both to the church and to the supposed converts. I remember very well several young men who were of good moral character and religiously promising. Instead of searching their hearts and aiming at their real conversion, the pastor never gave them any time to think about their spiritual condition. Instead, he pestered until he persuaded them (not the Spirit) to make a profession.

He thought they would live under a state of servitude to holy things if they professed religion, and he felt quite safe in pressing them because "they were so promising." He imagined vigilant examination would most likely discourage them and might even drive them away. So, to secure them, he made them hypocrites. The result is that, at the present time, these young men are much further away from the church of God than they would have been if they had been upset by being kept in their proper places and warned that they were not converted to God. Yet, their names are listed on the church roll.

It causes serious injury to a person received into the number of the faithful unless there's good reason to believe he is really regenerated. I am certain of this, because I speak after careful observation. Some of the most glaring sinners I know were once members of a church and were, as I believe, led to make a profession by undue pressure, well-meant pressure but lacking judgment. With this said, don't think that soul winning is made certain by the multiplication of baptisms and the swelling size of your church. After all, what do these reports from the battle-field mean? "Last night fourteen souls were under conviction, fifteen were justified, and eight received full sanctification."

I am weary of such public bragging – this counting of unhatched chickens, this exhibition of doubtful spoils. Lay aside such numberings of the people and idle pretense of certifying in half a

minute that which will need the testing of a lifetime. Hope for the best, but at the height of your enthusiasm be reasonable. Inquiry rooms are all well and good. But if they lead to idle boastings, they will grieve the Holy Spirit and work abounding evil.

Soul winning is not merely stirring up excitement. Excitement will accompany every great movement, but we should ask whether the movement would be sincere and powerful if it was as quiet and serene as a drawing-room Bible reading. You can't very well blast great rocks without the sound of explosions, nor fight a battle and keep everybody as quiet as a mouse. On a dry day, a carriage doesn't move along the road without creating some noise and dust. Friction and stimulation are the natural results of force in motion. So, when the Spirit of God moves and men's minds are stirred, there will be certain visible signs of the movement. However, these signs must never be confused with the movement itself.

If people imagine that stirring up dust is the object of a carriage rolling by, they can take a broom and quickly raise as much dust as fifty coaches. However, they will be committing a nuisance rather than bestowing a benefit. Excitement is as incidental as the dust, and it is not for one moment to be aimed at. When the woman swept her house, she did it to find her money and not for the sake of raising a cloud of dust, Or what woman having ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? (Luke 15:8).

Don't aim for sensationalism and "effect." Flowing tears and streaming eyes, sobs and outcries, crowded after-meetings and all kinds of confusion may occur, and might be accepted as attributes of genuine feeling, but please don't plan their fabrication.

Very often when converts are born in excitement, they die when the excitement is over. They are like certain insects which are the product of an exceedingly warm day, and die when the sun goes down. Certain converts live like salamanders that find themselves in the fire. They expire at a reasonable temperature. I don't delight in religion which needs or creates an impulsive, hotheaded convert. Give me godliness which flourishes upon Calvary rather than upon Vesuvius. The greatest zeal for Christ is consistent with common-sense and reason, while raving, ranting, and fanaticism are products of another zeal which is not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). We prepare men for the secluded gathering of the body of Christians who have one common faith and discipline and not for the padded room at Bedlam. No one is sorrier than I that a caution like this is needed. But as I remember the wandering thoughts and whimsical purposes of certain wild revivalists, I can't say less than this and, in fact, could say a great deal more.

What is the real winning of a soul for God? Since this is done by a means to an end approach, what are the processes by which a soul is led to God and to salvation? I take it that one of the main actions consists in instructing a man that he may know the truth of God (2 Timothy 2:25) . Instruction in the gospel is the beginning of all real work upon men's minds. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, behold, I am with you always even unto the end of the age. Amen (Matthew 28:19-20). Teaching begins the work and crowns it too.

The gospel according to Isaiah is, Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live (Isaiah 55:3). It's our part, then, to give men something worth hearing, in fact, to instruct them. We are sent to evangelize or preach the gospel to every creature, and that is not done unless we teach the great truths communicated by God himself. The gospel is good news. To listen to some preachers, you would think the gospel was a pinch of sacred snuff to make them wake up, or a bottle of fiery spirits to excite their brains. It is nothing of the kind. It is news. There's information in it. It includes instruction concerning matters men need to know and statements calculated to bless those who hear it. It's not a magical incantation or a charm. It

isn't a force that consists of a collection of sounds. It's a revelation of facts and truths which require knowledge and belief.

The gospel is a reasonable system, and it appeals to men's understanding. It's a matter for thought and consideration, and it appeals to the conscience and the power of reflection. Consequently, if we don't teach men something, we can shout, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" but what are they to believe? Each exhortation requires a corresponding instruction, or it will mean nothing. "Escape!" From what? This requires knowledge of the doctrine of the punishment of sin for its answer. "Fly!" But where? You must preach Christ, His wounds, and the clear doctrine of atonement by sacrifice. "Repent!" Of what? Here you must answer such questions as:

What is sin?

What is the evil of sin?

What are the consequences of sin ?

"Be converted!" But what is it to be converted? By what power can we be converted? Converted from what? And to what?

The field of instruction is wide if men are to be made to know the truth which saves. That the soul be without wisdom is not good (Proverbs 19:2). And as the Lord's instruments, it is our responsibility to bring men the truth. So they may know it, believe it, and feel its power. We are not to try and save men by our own efforts. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to seek to turn them from darkness to light.

And don't believe that when you go into revival meetings, or special evangelistic services, that it's permissible to leave the doctrines out of the gospel. If anything, for such occasions you ought to proclaim the doctrines of grace more, rather than less. Teach gospel doctrines clearly, affectionately, simply, and plainly. Especially, teach those truths which have a current and practical bearing upon man's condition and God's grace. Some fanatics seem to have accepted the notion that as soon as a minister finds himself addressing the unconverted, he should deliberately avoid his usual doctrinal subjects, because it is supposed that no conversions will occur if he preaches the whole counsel of God.

This practice suggests that we are supposed to conceal truth and utter a half-falsehood in order to save souls. Yet, we are to speak the truth to God's people, because they will not hear anything else. This is to suggest that we are to coax sinners into faith by exaggerating one part of the truth and hiding the rest until a more convenient time.

This is a strange theory, and yet many endorse it. According to them, we may preach the redemption of a chosen number to God's people, but universal redemption must be our doctrine when we speak with the outside world. This practice sends a mixed message that we are to tell believers salvation is all by grace, but sinners are to be spoken to as if they are to save themselves. We are to inform Christians that God the Holy Spirit alone can convert, but when we talk with the unsaved, the Holy Spirit is scarcely mentioned. We have not learned Christ in this way.

While others have done this, let them be our warning beacons and not our examples. He who sent us to win souls neither permits us to invent falsehoods, nor suppress the truth. His work can be done without such suspicious methods.

Perhaps some of you will reply, "But, still, God has blessed half-statements and wild assertions." Don't be so sure. I maintain that God does not bless falsehood. He may bless the truth which is mixed up with error, but much more blessing would come if the preaching fell more in accordance with His own Word. I can't admit that the Lord blesses evangelistic Jesuitism (cunning, deceit, hypocrisy, prevarication, deceptive practices to effect a purpose), and for me to describe it as the suppression of truth is not too harsh. The withholding of the doctrine of the total depravity of man has brought about serious harm to many who have listened to such preaching. These people don't experience a true healing, because they don't

recognize the disease under which they suffer. They are never truly clothed in Christ's righteousness, because nothing is done towards stripping them.

Many ministries don't probe the heart enough or arouse the conscience by revealing man's alienation from God and proclaiming the selfishness and wickedness of such a state. Men need to be told that only divine grace can bring them out of their enmity to God. And if they choose not to accept His grace, the consequence is that they must eternally perish, Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber (John 10:1). They must be reminded of the sovereignty of God. He isn't obliged to bring them out of this state. In fact, He would be right and just if He left them in such a condition, for they have no goodness or excellence which entitles them the honor to plead before Him and no claims upon Him, They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is no one that does good, no, not one (Psalm 14:3). If they are to be saved, it must be by grace and by grace alone. The preacher's work is to bring sinners low to see their utter helplessness, so they may be compelled to look up to Him who alone can help them.

To try to win a soul for Christ by keeping that soul in ignorance of any truth is contrary to the mind of the Spirit. To endeavor to save men by absurd or nonsensical talk, ideas, excitement, or rhetorical display is as foolish as to hope to hold an angel with adhesive or to lure a star with music. The best attraction is the gospel in its purity. The weapon with which the Lord conquers men is the truth as it is in Jesus. The gospel has the same magnitude in every emergency – an arrow which can pierce the hardest heart, and a balm which will heal the deadliest wound. Preach it, and preach nothing else. Rely implicitly upon the old, old gospel. You need no other nets when you fish for men. Those your Master has given you are strong enough for the great fish and have mesh fine enough to hold the little ones. Spread these nets and no others, and you'll have no need to fear the fulfilment of His Word. I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19).

Secondly, to win a soul it is necessary, not only to instruct our hearer and make him know the truth, but to impress him so that he may feel it. A purely educational ministry, which always appeals to the understanding and leaves the emotions untouched, would certainly be a crippled ministry. The legs of the lame are not equal , says Solomon, and the unequal legs of some ministries cripple them (Proverbs 26:7 KJV). We have seen such a ministry limp along with a long doctrinal leg but a very short emotional leg.

It's a horrible thing for a man to be so doctrinal and cerebral that he can speak coolly of the doom of the wicked. He experiences no anguish of heart to think of the ruin of millions of people. That's horrible. I hate to hear the terrors of the Lord proclaimed by men whose hard facades, harsh tones, and unfeeling spirit betray a sort of doctrinal dryness. All the milk of human kindness is dehydrated out of them. Having no feeling himself, such a preacher stirs no one. People sit and listen while he keeps to dry, lifeless statements until they come to value him for being sound – founded in truth – and they come to be sound in the same way and just as dry. I must add, sound asleep as well. What life they do have is spent sniffing out heresy and making sincere men offenders for a word. May we never be baptized into this spirit.

Whatever I believe, or do not believe, the command to love my neighbor as myself still maintains its claim upon me, And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:31). God forbid that any views or opinions should so shrink my soul and harden my heart as to make me forget this law of love. The love of God is first, but this by no means lessens the obligation of love to man. In fact, the first command includes the second. We are to seek our neighbor's conversion because we love him. We are to speak to him in loving terms and share God's loving gospel, because our heart desires his eternal good.

A sinner has a heart as well as a head – emotions and thoughts. And we must appeal to both.

A sinner will never be converted until his emotions are stirred. Unless he feels sorrow for sin, and unless he has some measure of joy in the reception of the Word, you can't have much hope for him. The Truth must soak into the soul and dye it with its own color.

The Word must be like a strong wind sweeping through the whole heart and swaying the whole man, even as a field of ripening corn waves in the summer breeze. Religion without emotion is religion without life.

But, still, we must think about how these emotions are caused. Don't toy with the mind by exciting feelings which are not spiritual. Some preachers are very fond of introducing topics like funerals and dying children into their sermons. They cause people to weep through sheer natural affection. This may lead up to something better, but in itself what is its value? What's the good of stirring up a mother's grief or a widow's sorrow? I don't believe our merciful Lord sent us to make men weep over their departed relatives by digging their graves again and recounting past scenes of bereavement and woe. Why should He?

Granted, you may utilize the death-bed experience of a departing Christian, or of a dying sinner, for proof of the state of reconciliation to God through faith in the one case, and the terror of conscience in the other. However, it's through the facts, and not the illustration, that good must arise.

In and of itself, natural grief is of no use. It's a distraction from more important thoughts and a price too great to exact from tender hearts. Unless we can repay them by grafting lasting spiritual impressions upon the stock of natural affection. "What a splendid sermon, full of qualities that evoke sadness," said one who heard it. But what's the practical outcome of this sadness?

A young preacher once remarked, "Weren't you greatly struck to see such a large congregation weeping?"

"Yes," said his sensible friend, "but upon reflection, I was more struck that they would probably have wept more at a play."

This is exactly what I'm talking about. The weeping in both cases may be equally insignificant and useless. I saw a girl on board a steamboat reading a book. She cried as if her heart would break. But when I glanced at the title, I saw it was only one of those silly cheap novels which load our railway bookstalls. Her tears were an absolute waste of moisture, and so are those produced by mere pulpit tale-telling and death bed images.

If our hearers weep over their sins, because Jesus let their tears flow in rivers, that is one thing. But if their sorrow is merely a natural response and not at all spiritual, what good is it to get them worked up and weeping? While there might be some worth in making people joyful, when it comes to sorrow there is enough in the world, so what's the use of creating needless misery?

What right do you have to go through the world pricking everybody with your sharp surgical instrument just to show your skill in surgery? A true physician only makes incisions to bring about cures. And a wise minister only excites painful emotions in men's minds with the distinct object of blessing their souls. You and I must continue to drive at men's hearts till they are broken. Then we must keep on preaching Christ crucified till their hearts are committed. When this is accomplished, we must continue to proclaim the gospel till their whole nature is brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ.

Even in these preliminary aspects of soul winning, you will need the Holy Spirit to work with you and through you. This need will be even more evident when we advance a step further and speak of the new birth itself in which the Holy Spirit works in a style and manner most divine.

I have already asserted that both instruction and feelings are necessary to soul winning, but they are only a means to the desired end. A far greater work must be accomplished before a man is saved. A wonder of divine grace must be worked upon the soul, a work far beyond

anything which can be accomplished by the power of man. While we would be pleased to win people for Jesus, the truth is Except a person be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The Holy Spirit must regenerate the areas of the mind which pursue accomplishment, attainment, and ultimate purpose. Without the Holy Spirit, affections regarding such things can never bear eternal happiness. People must be made alive into a new life and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are made new (2 Corinthians 5:17). The same energy which accomplishes resurrection and creation must put forth all its power to bring forth this new life, for nothing short of this can meet the need, Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a person be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). They must be born again from above. At first this might seem to put human activity completely out of the picture, but turning to the Scriptures we find nothing to justify such an implication. In fact, the tendency found in Scripture is quite the opposite.

In Scripture we find the Lord to be all in all, but we also find no hint that we should disregard His use of willing servants. The Lord's supreme majesty and power are seen all the more gloriously, because He works in different ways and through different means. He is so great that He is not afraid to put honor upon the people He employs for a special purpose by speaking of them in noble terms, and crediting them with great influence.

It's sad to say, but it is possible to say too little of the Holy Spirit. In fact, I fear this is one of the crying sins of the age. Still, the infallible Word, which always rightly balances truth, magnifies the Holy Spirit and doesn't speak lightly of the men by whom He works. God does not think His own honor to be so questionable that it can only be maintained by criticizing the human agent.

Two passages in the epistles, when put together, have often amazed me. In these passages, Paul compares himself to both a father and a mother in the matter of the new birth. Regarding one convert he says, Whom I have begotten in my bonds (Philemon 1:10). And of a whole church he says, My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (Galatians 4:19). This goes much further than modern orthodoxy permits the most constructive minister to venture, and yet it is language sanctioned and dictated by the Spirit of God Himself. Therefore, it is not to be criticized. God infuses such mysterious power into the means which He ordains that we are called labourers together with God (1 Corinthians 3:9) . This instantly becomes the source of our responsibility and the base of our hope.

Regeneration, or the new birth, works a change in the whole nature of man. And, so far as we can judge, its essence lies in the implantation and creation of a new being within the man. The Holy Spirit creates in us a new, heavenly, and immortal nature, which is known in Scripture as the spirit , as a means of distinction from the soul.

Our theory of regeneration is that man, in his fallen nature, consists only of body and soul, and when he is regenerated a new and higher nature is created in him – the spirit – which is a spark from the everlasting fire of God's life and love. This falls into the heart, abides there, and makes its receiver a partaker of the divine nature. From that point on, the man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit. The spirit is the controlling power of the three. [1]

For an example of this, look at that memorable chapter dealing with the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, this distinction is brought out in the original manuscripts and can still be seen in our Bible versions today if you take the time to study the original. The 1 Corinthians 15 passage rendered, It is sown a natural body… might better read, It is sown a soulish body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a soulish body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a life-giving Spirit . Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is soulish; and afterward that which is spiritual (1

Corinthians 15:44-46, author's paraphrase).

We start off in the natural or soulish stage of being, like the first Adam, and then in regeneration we enter into a new condition. We become possessors of the life-giving Spirit . Without this Spirit, no man can see or enter the kingdom of heaven, (John 3:5). Therefore, as soul winners, it must be our intense desire that the Holy Spirit visit our hearers, and create them anew – that He comes down upon these dry bones and breathes eternal life into those dead in sin.

Until this happens, they can never receive the truth. But the natural man does not perceive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). Because the prudence of the flesh is enmity against God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, neither indeed can it (Romans 8:7). A new and heavenly mind must be created by omnipotence, otherwise the man must abide in death. You see, we have a mighty work before us, a work which we are totally incapable of in and of ourselves. No minister of Christ can save a soul, nor can all of us put together accomplish this feat. In fact, it is impossible for all the saints on earth or in heaven to work regeneration in a single person. The whole business of saving souls, on our part, is the height of absurdity, unless we consider ourselves used by the Holy Spirit and filled with His power.

On the other hand, the marvels of regeneration which accompany our ministry are the best seals and witnesses of our divine summons, If I am not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:2).

While the apostles could appeal to the miracles of Christ, and to those which they performed in His name, we draw attention to the miracles of the Holy Spirit, which are as divine and real as those of our Lord Himself. These miracles are the creation of a new life within the human heart, at the center of their passions, bringing about a total change of the whole being of any upon whom the Spirit descends.

[1]. Publisher's Note: Today we may have been given more insight, as scripture seems to indicate that men consist of spirit, soul, and body: Therefore, I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul (Job 7:11); And the very God of peace sanctify you completely, that your spirit, soul, and body be preserved whole without reprehension for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23). It's likely not an addition of a spirit, but a regeneration of our spirit, which is then able to commune with the Holy Spirit. For more information, please refer to The Spiritual Man, Watchman Nee (Christian Fellowship Publishers).

Chapter 2

Conviction of Sin

Since this God-begotten spiritual life in men is a mystery beyond human comprehension, we shall address the more practical consequences of the new birth. If we dwell upon the signs following and accompanying this miraculous new birth, then these are the things we must aim to see. First, regeneration is displayed in conviction of sin. We believe this to be an indispensable mark of the Spirit's work.

One of the first effects of the new life as it enters the heart is intense inward pain in regards to sin. However, nowadays, we hear of people being healed before they have been wounded, and being brought into a certainty of justification without ever having lamented their condemnation.

We are very skeptical as to the value of such healings and views of justification, because this style or methodology is not practiced according to the truth. God never clothes men until He has first stripped them, nor does He make them alive through the gospel until they first are slain by the law.

When you meet with people in whom there is no trace of conviction of sin, you may be quite sure they haven't been guided or managed by the Holy Spirit. For when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8). When the Spirit of the Lord breathes on us, He withers all the glory of man like the flower of grass. Then He reveals a higher and abiding glory. Do not be astonished if you find this conviction of sin to be very acute and alarming. On the other hand, do not condemn those in whom it is less intense, for so long as sin is mourned over, confessed, forsaken, and abhorred, you have evidence of the fruit of the Spirit.

Much of the horror and unbelief which accompanies conviction is not of the Spirit of God. It comes from Satan or our own corrupt nature. Yet, there must be true and deep conviction of sin. This is what the preacher must labor to produce, because when this isn't felt, the new birth has not taken place.

Simple Faith in Jesus

It is equally true that conversion may be recognized by the exhibition of a simple faith in Jesus Christ. You don't need me to speak to you about that, because you are already fully persuaded regarding this matter. Faith is the very center of the target at which you aim. Proof that a man's soul is won for Jesus is never evident until he has come to the end of himself and his own merits, and has drawn near to Christ. Great care must be taken that this faith is exercised upon Christ for a complete salvation, and not for a part of it. A number of people think the Lord Jesus is available for the pardon of past sin, but they can't trust Him to keep them from destruction in the future.

They trust for years past but not for years to come. Since Christ's work of salvation is never divided into parts like this in Scripture, either He bore all our sins or none, Therefore he is able also to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make

intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25). He either saves us once for all or not at all. His death can never be repeated, and so it must have made atonement for both the past and future sin of a believer. Otherwise, they are lost, since no further atonement can be supposed while future sin is certain to be committed. Blessed be His name, and in him all that believe are justified from all the things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39). Salvation by grace is eternal salvation. Sinners must commit their souls to the keeping of Christ for all eternity. How else are they saved? Sadly, according to the teaching of some, believers are only saved in part. To complete their salvation, they must depend upon their own future endeavors. Is this the gospel? No.

Genuine faith trusts a whole Christ for the whole of salvation. Is it any wonder that many converts fall away, when, in fact, they were never taught to exercise faith in Jesus for eternal salvation, but only for temporary conversion? A faulty presentation of Christ brings about a faulty faith. When this languishes in its own weakness, who is to blame? According to their faith so is it unto them, Then he touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you (Matthew 9:29). Both the preacher and the possessor of a partial faith must bear the blame of the failure when their poor mutilated trust breaks down. I earnestly maintain this point, because a semi-legal way of believing is so common and so wrong.

We must urge the trembling sinner to trust completely and only upon the Lord Jesus forever, or we will have him implying that he is to begin in the Spirit and be made perfect by the flesh. In other words, he will confidently walk by faith as it relates to the past, but then as to the future he will trust in his works. This faulty faith will be fatal. True faith in Jesus receives eternal life and sees perfect salvation in Him, whose one sacrifice has sanctified the people of God once for all, For he that is dead died unto sin once, and he that lives, lives unto God (Romans 6:10).

The sense of being saved – completely saved – in Christ Jesus is not, as some suppose, the source of fleshly security and the enemy of holy zeal. It is, in fact, the direct opposite. Delivered from the fear which makes the salvation of self a more immediate object than salvation from self, and inspired by holy gratitude to his Redeemer, the regenerated man becomes capable of moral goodness and is filled with an enthusiasm for God's glory. While trembling under a sense of insecurity, a man gives his foremost thoughts to his own interests. But when planted firmly on the Rock of ages, he possesses time and heart to voice the new song which the Lord has put into his mouth. Then his moral salvation is complete, for self is no longer the lord of his being. Don't rest or feel content that the job is done until you see clear evidence in your converts of a simple, sincere, and decided faith in the Lord Jesus.

Real Repentance of Sin

Along with undivided faith in Jesus Christ, there must also be real repentance of sin. Repentance is an old-fashioned word, not much used by modern revivalists. "Oh!" said a minister to me, one day, "it only means a change of mind." This was thought to be a profound observation.

Only a change of mind? But what a change! True repentance is a change of mind with regard to everything. Instead of saying, "It's only a change of mind," it seems more truthful to say it is a great and deep change – even a change of the mind itself. But whatever the literal Greek word may mean, repentance is no triviality. You won't find a better definition of it than the one given in the children's hymn:

> Repentance is to leave
> The sins we loved before
> And show that we in earnest grieve,
> By doing so no more.

True conversion is joined by a sense of sin in all men, which we talked about under the topic of conviction. This sense of sin is also accompanied by a sorrow for sin, or holy grief for having committed it, and a hatred of sin, which proves its dominion is ended. This includes a practical turning from sin, which shows the life within the soul is directing the life on the outside. True belief and true repentance are twins. It would be futile to attempt to say which is born first. All the spokes of a wheel move at once when the wheel moves, and so all the graces are put into action when regeneration is produced by the Holy Spirit. However, there must be repentance. No sinner looks to the Savior with a dry eye or a hard heart.

Therefore, aim at heart-breaking, at bringing home condemnation to the conscience and weaning the mind from sin. Don't be content until the whole mind is deeply and vitally changed in regard to sin.

Real Change of Life

Another proof of winning a soul for Christ is in a real change of life. If a man doesn't live differently than how he did before, both at home and beyond the walls of his house, his repentance needs to be repented of, because his conversion is a fabrication. More than actions and language must change, for the spirit and temper must be changed. "But," someone says, "grace is often grafted on a seedling used as a stock. "

I know it is, but what's the fruit of the grafting? The fruit will be like the graft, and not take on the nature of the original stem.

Another argues, "But, I have an awful temper, and all of a sudden it overcomes me. My fit of anger is soon over, and I feel a great sorrow of heart. Though I can't control myself, I'm quite sure I am a Christian."

Not so fast, my friend, for I'm quite as sure the other way. What's the use of your soon-cooling, hot temper if in the two or three moments it boils over you scald all around you? If a man stabs me in a fury, it won't heal my wound to see him grieve over his madness. A hasty temper must be conquered, Cease from anger and forsake wrath: let not thy wrath in any wise cause you to become evil. For evildoers shall be cut off; but those that wait for the LORD, they shall inherit the earth (Psalm 37:8-9). The whole man must be renewed, or conversion will be questionable.

As soul winners, we are not to hold up a modified standard of holiness before our people and say, "You'll be all right if you reach that standard." Scripture says, He that commits sin is of the devil (1 John 3:8). Remaining under the power of any known sin is a mark of our being the servants of sin, for his slaves ye are to whom ye obey (Romans 6:16). The boasts of a man who harbors the love of any transgression are ineffectual. He may feel what he likes and believe what he likes, but malignant bitterness is still in him. He is still in the bonds of iniquity while a single sin rules his heart and life. True regeneration implants a hatred of all evil. Where even a single sin is delighted in, the witness of the evidence is fatal to hope founded in truth. A man doesn't need to take a dozen poisons to destroy his life, one is quite sufficient. Harmony must exist between the life and the profession.

A Christian professes to renounce sin. If he doesn't do so, his very name is a deception. A drunken man came up to Rowland Hill, one day, and said, "I am one of your converts, Mr. Hill."

"I suppose you are," the shrewd and sensible preacher replied. "But you are not one of the Lord's, or you wouldn't be drunk." We must practically test all our work in this way.

In converts, we must also see true prayer, which is the vital breath of godliness. If there is no prayer, you may be quite sure the soul is dead. I'm not saying we are to urge men to pray as though it were the great gospel duty and the one set way of salvation. Our chief message is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-31). It's easy to place a wrong emphasis on prayer and make it out to be a kind of work by which men are to live. I trust you will most carefully avoid

doing this.

Faith is the great gospel grace, but we must not forget that true faith always prays. When a man professes faith in the Lord Jesus and doesn't cry to the Lord daily, we dare not believe in his faith or conversion. The Holy Spirit's evidence by which He convinced Ananias of Paul's conversion was not, "Behold, he talks loudly of his joys and feelings," but, Behold, he prays (Acts 9:11) . And that prayer was earnest, heartbroken confession and supplication. Oh, to see this sure evidence in all who profess to be our converts.

Willingness to Obey the Lord

There must also be a willingness to obey the Lord in all His commandments. It's a shameful thing for a man to agree to discipleship and then refuse to learn his Lord's will regarding certain points or even dare to spurn obedience when that will is known. How can a man be a disciple of Christ when he openly lives in disobedience to Him?

If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows his Lord's will but doesn't intend to heed His will, you are not to pamper his impertinence. Instead, it's your responsibility to assure him that he is not saved. Didn't the Lord say, And he that does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:38)? Mistakes as to what the Lord's will may be are to be tenderly corrected, but anything like willful disobedience is serious and to tolerate it would be betrayal to Him who sent us. Jesus must be received as King as well as Priest. Where there is any hesitancy about this, the foundation of godliness is not yet laid.

Faith must obey her Maker's will
As well as trust His grace
A pardoning God is jealous still
For His own holiness.

You see, to this extent, the signs which prove a soul is won are by no means insignificant, and the work to be done before those signs can exist isn't to be taken lightly. A soul winner can do nothing without God. He must throw himself on the Invisible or be a laughing-stock to the devil. For the devil regards all who think they can subdue human nature with mere words and arguments with complete disdain. To all who hope to succeed in such an effort by their own strength, we refer to the words of the Lord to Job , Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook or with the cord which thou lettest down on his tongue? Canst thou put a hook into his nose or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee that thou shall take him for a slave for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird, or wilt thou tie him up for thy maidens? Shall the companions make a banquet of him? Shall they part him among the merchants? Canst thou cut his skin with knives or his head with a fish spear? Lay thine hand upon him; thou shalt remember the battle and do no more. Behold, your hope regarding him shall fail; for even at the sight of him they shall faint (Job 41:1-9). Dependence upon God is our strength and our joy. In that dependence, let's go forth and seek to win souls for Him.

In the course of our ministry, we will meet with many failures in this matter of soul winning. In the course of my ministry, I've thought I caught numerous birds and even managed to put salt on their tails, only to see them fly off after all. One man I will call Tom Careless was the terror of the village in which he lived. Several incendiary fires in the region were attributed to him by most people. Sometimes, he'd be drunk for two or three weeks at a spell, and during those times he raved and raged like a madman. That man came to hear me. I'll never forget the commotion that stirred through the little chapel when he walked in. He sat there and fell in love

with me. I think that was the only conversion he experienced, but he professed to be converted. He had, apparently, been the subject of genuine repentance. Outwardly, he became quite a changed man. He gave up drinking and swearing, and in many respects was an exemplary individual. I recall seeing him tugging a barge with perhaps a hundred people on board. He was drawing them to a place where I was going to preach. He gloried in the work, singing as gladly and happily as any one of them.

If anybody spoke a word against the Lord or His servant, he didn't hesitate a moment to knock him down. Before I left the district, I feared there was no real work of grace in him. He was a wild sort of a man. I'd even heard that he'd taken a bird, plucked it, and ate it raw in the field. This isn't the act of a Christian man displaying decent behavior or someone with a good reputation. After I left the neighborhood, I asked about him. Unfortunately, I heard nothing good.

The spirit that kept him outwardly right was gone, and he became worse than ever, if that was possible. He certainly wasn't any better, and he was unreachable by any means. The point is that that work of mine didn't stand the test of fire. You see, after the person who had influence over the man (me) was gone, he couldn't bear up against even ordinary temptation.

When you move from the village or town where you've been preaching, it's very likely that some, who appeared to run well, will go back to their old ways. They have a fondness for you, and your words have a kind of mesmerizing influence over them, but when you're gone, the dog returns unto his own vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22). Don't be in a hurry to count these supposed converts. Don't take them into the church too soon and don't be too proud of their enthusiasm, if it isn't accompanied with some degree of softening and tenderness to show that the Holy Spirit has really been at work within them.

I remember another case of quite a different sort. This person I will call Miss Mary Shallow, for she was a young lady never blessed with much sense. She lived in the same house as several Christian young ladies, and she professed to be converted. When I talked with her, she had all the answers one could wish for. I even thought of recommending her to the church, but it was determined best to give her a little trial time first.

After a while, she left the company of those Christian ladies where she had lived and went to a place where she had no such fellowship to help her. I never heard anything more of her, except that she spent all her time thinking about her outward appearance, dressing as smartly as she could, and pursuing opportunities to be with fine society. She is a type of those who lack mental furnishings like knowledge or ideas. If the grace of God doesn't take possession of the empty space, they very soon go back into the world.

I have also known several like a young man whom I will call Charlie Clever, uncommonly clever fellows at anything and everything, including faking religion. They prayed very fluently, tried to preach, and did it very well. Whatever they did, they did it nonchalantly, and it came easy to them. Don't be in a hurry to take such people into the church. They haven't known humiliation on account of sin, haven't experienced brokenness of heart, nor do they have a sense of divine grace. They shout, "All is perfect and bright!" and away they go. You'll find that they never repay you for your labor and trouble.

These clever sorts are also able to use the language of God's people as well as the best of His saints. They even talk about their doubts and fears and can stir up a deep emotional experience in five minutes. However, they are a little too clever and likely to do much harm when they get into the church. So be diligent and keep them out if you possibly can.

I remember another man who was very pious in his talk, I will call him John Fairspeech. Oh, how craftily he could act the hypocrite. He'd get among our young men and lead them into all manner of sin and iniquity, and yet he would come to see me and hold half-an-hour's spiritual conversation. A detestable rogue living in open sin at the very time he sought to come to the Lord's table, join our societies, and was anxious to take a leading role in every good work. Keep

your eyes open for changes. This crafty sort will come to you with money in their hands, like Peter's fish with the silver in its mouth, and they will appear to be so helpful in the work. They speak softly and are such perfect gentlemen. Yes, I believe Judas was a man exactly of this kind, very clever at deceiving those around him.

We must pay attention that we don't get any of these into the church if there's any way we can keep them out. At the close of a service, you may say to yourself, "Here is a splendid haul of fish!" Wait a bit. Remember our Savior's words, Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind of fish (Matthew 13:47). Don't number your fish before they are broiled, nor count your converts before you have tested and tried them. This process may make your work somewhat slow, but it will be sure. Do your work steadily and well, so those who come after you won't have to say it was far more trouble to them to clear the church of those who ought never to have been admitted than it was for you to admit them.

If God enables you to build three thousand bricks into His spiritual temple in one day, you may do it. But Peter has been the only bricklayer who has accomplished that feat up to the present. Don't go and paint the wooden wall to make it look like solid stone but, instead, let all your building be real, substantial, and true, for only this kind of work is worth doing. Let all your building for God be like that of the apostle Paul, According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each one see how the building is built. For no one can lay another foundation than that laid, which is Jesus the Christ. Now if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, the work of each one shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire; the work of each one, whatever sort it is, the fire shall put it to test. If the work of anyone abides which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If anyone's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

Chapter 3

Qualifications for Soul Winning – Godward

Your main business is to win souls. Like shoeing-smiths, we need to know a great many things. Just as the smith must know about horses and how to make shoes for them, so we must know about souls and how to win them for God. In this chapter, I shall address part of the subject of qualifications as we start to look at the set of qualifications that are Godward. As I take this approach, I will try to treat the subject in a somewhat common-sense style and ask you to judge for yourselves what those qualifications would be. For instance, which qualifications would God naturally look for in His servants? What qualifications would He be likely to approve and most likely to use?

You must know that every workman, if he is wise, uses a tool to accomplish the purpose he has in mind. Some artists have never been able to play except upon their own violin, nor paint except with their own favorite brush and palette. Certainly, the great God, the mightiest of all workers, in His great artistic work of soul winning, loves to have His own special tools. In the original creation, He used only His own instruments, For he spoke, and it was done (Psalm 33:9). In the new creation, the effectual agent is still His powerful Word. He speaks through the ministry of His servants. Therefore, they must be fit trumpets for Him to speak through and fit instruments for Him to use to convey His Word to the ears and hearts of men. Based on this, judge whether God will use you. Imagine yourself in His place and think what kind of men you would be most likely use if you were in the position of the Most High God.

Holiness of Character

I am sure you would say, first of all, a man who is to be a soul winner must have holiness of character. How few who attempt to preach think enough about this. If they did, it would strike them at once that the Eternal would never use dirty tools, that the very-holy Jehovah would only select holy instruments to accomplish His work. No wise man pours his wine into dirty bottles. No kind and good parent allows his children to go to see an immoral play or movie. In the same way, God will not work with instruments who compromise His own character.

Suppose it was well known that, if men were just clever, God would use them, no matter what their character and conduct might be. Suppose it was understood that you could do as well in the work of God by using mean or unfair stratagem to obscure the truth, as by honesty and uprightness. What man in the world, with any morally right convictions, wouldn't be ashamed of such a state of affairs? But, it isn't so. Many today tell us that the theatre is a great school for morals. That must be a strange school where the teachers never learn their own lessons. In God's school, the teachers must be masters of the art of holiness.

If we teach one thing by our lips and another by our lives, those who listen to us will say, "Physician, heal yourself. You say, 'Repent.' Where is your repentance? You say, 'Serve God and be obedient to His will.' Do you serve Him? Are you obedient to His will?"

An unholy ministry would be a dishonor to God, Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD (Isaiah 52:11), and laughed at in contempt by the world. He will speak through a fool, if

he is a holy man. Of course, I don't mean God chooses fools to be His ministers, but let a man become really holy, and, even if he only has the slightest ability, he will be a more fit instrument in God's hand than the man of great acquired skills who is not obedient to divine will, nor clean and pure in the sight of the Lord God Almighty.

I beg you to place the highest importance on your own personal holiness. Live for God. If you don't, your Lord will not be with you. He will say of you as He said of the false prophets of old, I did not send them, neither have I commanded them, neither did I speak unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision, divination, vanity, and the deceit of their heart (Jeremiah 14:14).

You may preach fine sermons, but if you yourself are not holy, souls will not be saved. It is probable that you won't come to the conclusion that your lack of holiness is the reason for your lack of success. Instead, you will blame the people, the age in which you live – anything except yourself. This is the root of the harmful consequence. I know men of considerable ability and diligence who go on year after year without any increase in their churches. The reason is that they aren't living before God as they ought to live. Sometimes, the evil is in the family of the minister. His sons and daughters are rebels against God. Bad language is allowed even among his own children, and his reprimands are simply like Eli's placid question to his wicked sons, "Why do ye do such things?" (1 Samuel 2:23).

Sometimes, the minister is worldly, greedy after advancement and profit, and neglectful of his work. None of this is in line with God's mind, and He will not bless such a man. When I listened to Mr. George Müller preach at Mentone, it was a talk much like an ordinary teacher might give to a Sunday-school class. Yet, I never heard a sermon which did me more good or so richly profited my soul. It was George Müller in it that made it so useful. In one sense, there was no George Müller in it, for he preached not himself but Christ Jesus the Lord. He was only there in his personality as a witness to the truth. But he bore that witness in such a manner that you couldn't help but say, "That man not only preaches what he believes but also what he lives."

In every word he uttered, his glorious life of faith seemed to fall upon both ear and heart. I was delighted to sit and listen to him, yet, there wasn't a trace of compelling reason or something new in the whole discourse. Holiness was the preacher's life and, believe me, if God is to bless us, our strength must lie in that same objective.

This holiness ought to show itself in fellowship with God. If a man delivers his own message, it will have as much power as his own character gives to it. However, if he delivers his Master's message, having heard it from his Master's lips, that will be quite another thing. If he acquired something of the Master's Spirit as He looked upon him and gave him the message…. If he can reproduce the expression of his Master's face and the tone of His voice, that's quite another thing.

Read McCheyne's Memoir. I can't recommend a more beneficial read. It doesn't offer a fresh or new thought, but even though there isn't anything very original or striking in it, as you read it, it will benefit you. For as you read, you become aware that it's the story of the life of a man who walked with God.

Moody would never have spoken with the boldness he did if he hadn't lived a life of fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. The greatest strength of the sermon lies in what has gone before the sermon. You must get ready for the whole service through private fellowship with God and real holiness of character.

High Degree of Spiritual Life

You will agree that, if a man is to be used as a winner of souls, he must have spiritual life to a high degree. Our work here on Earth, under God, is to impart life to others. It suits us to imitate Elisha when he stretched himself upon the dead child and brought him back to life. The

prophet's staff wasn't sufficient, because it had no life in it (2 Kings 4:29). Life must be conveyed by a living instrument, and the man who is to pass on the life must have a great deal of it himself.

Remember the words of Christ, He that believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:38). That living water is the Holy Spirit. Once He dwells within a living child of God, living water rises out of the very midst of him as a fountain, or river, so others may come and participate in the Spirit's gracious influences. I don't think anyone reading this book would wish to be a dead minister. God will not use dead tools to work living miracles. He must have living men – men who are wholly alive, As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eats me, he shall also live by me (John 6:57). While many are alive, they are not completely alive.

Once I saw a painting depicting the resurrection of the saints. It was one of the oddest pictures I'd ever laid eyes on. The artist attempted to capture the moment when the work of rebirth was only half done. In the painting, some people were alive down as far as their waists, some had one arm alive, and others only had part of their heads alive. When a person is truly regenerated, they are fully alive. But in our day, this depiction is quite possible. We have men who are only half alive. They have a living jaw but not a living heart. Others have a living heart, but not a living brain. Still others have a living eye. They can see things pretty plainly, but their hearts are not alive. Such men can give good descriptions of what they see, but they contain no warmth of love.

Some ministers are one-half angel and the other half – well, let's say maggots. It's an awful contrast, but instances of this are common. Such ministers preach well, and as you listen to one of them you say, "That's a good man," because you feel he is a good man. If you hear he's going to a certain person's house for supper, you think I'll go there, too , so you can hear the gracious words which will fall from his lips. But when you do, watch what happens. Out they come – not benevolent words, but maggots. What seemed an angel in the pulpit now delivered worms.

While this is common, it ought never to be so. If we want to be true witnesses for God, we must be all angel and no part worm, Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in the heavens is perfect (Matthew 5:48). God deliver us from this state of semi-death. May we be totally alive from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot.

I know ministers who are like this. You can't come into contact with them without feeling the power of the spiritual life within them. It isn't merely while they talk about religious topics either. It's evident when they discuss commonplace things of the world. Even then, it's obvious there is something about the men which tells you they are wholly alive to God. Men like this will be used by God for the sharing of life with others.

A Man of Humble Spirit

Suppose it were possible for you to be exalted into the place of God. What would you do? Do you think you would use a man in your service who thought little of himself, a man of humble spirit? What about a very proud man? Would you be likely to use him as your servant?

Certainly, the great God has a preference for those who are humble. For thus has said the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is The Holy One; I dwell in the high place and in holiness and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit to cause the spirit of the humble to live and to cause the heart of the contrite ones to live (Isaiah 57:15). He loathes the proud, and whenever He sees those who think they are more important than others, He passes them by.

But whenever He finds the lowly in heart, He takes pleasure in exalting them, because He delights in humility among His ministers. To see a proud minister is an awful sight, because few

things can give the Devil more joy than this. When he walks about in the world, the Devil says, "Here is something that delights me. All the preparations are in place. Before long, a great fall shall take place."

Some ministers even show their pride by their style in the pulpit. You can never forget the way they present their text: "It is I: be not afraid (John 6:20)." Others manifest it in their attire, in the impractical vanity of their dress, or in their lewd talk. In such ways, they continually magnify the faults of others and amplify their own extra-ordinary superiorities.

We have two sorts of proud people, and it's difficult to say which of the two is worse. First, we have the sort of people who are filled with that pride which talks about itself and invites other people to talk about it, too, and to pat it on the back, and stroke it the right way. It is completely full of its little morsel of self and goes around strutting and saying, "Praise me, please, praise me, I want it," like a little child who goes to each one in the room, and says, "See my new dress? Isn't it pretty?" It's likely you have seen some of these good looking sorts who greatly value themselves. I've met many of them.

The other kind of pride is too inflated for that sort of thing. It doesn't care for it. In fact, it despises people so much that it doesn't lower itself to wish for their praises. It is so extremely satisfied with itself that it doesn't stoop to consider what others think of it at all. I have sometimes thought it is the more dangerous kind of pride spiritually, but it's the more respectable of the two. There is, after all, something very noble in being too proud to be proud.

Then there's the other poor little soul who says, "Well, everybody's praise is worth something." So he baits his little traps and tries to catch little bits of praise, so he can cook them for his breakfast. He has a mighty appetite for such things.

Brothers, get rid of both kinds of pride. If you have anything of either of them – the dwarf pride or the ogre pride – both are abominations in the sight of the Lord. Never forget that you are disciples of Him who said, I am meek and humble of heart (Matthew 11:29).

Humility doesn't mean you must think yourself destitute of honor. If a man has a low opinion of himself, it is very possible he is correct in his estimate. I have known people whose opinion of themselves, according to what they have said, was very low. They thought so little of their own abilities that they admitted to me that they had no independence or resourcefulness. So they never ventured to try to do any good.

I've known wonderfully humble people who always liked to pick an easy position for themselves. By this, I mean they were too humble to do anything that would bring any blame upon themselves and called it humility. In my mind "sinful love of ease" would have been a better name for their behavior. True humility leads you to think rightly and truthfully about yourselves.

In the matter of soul winning, humility makes you feel that you are nothing and nobody. Therefore, if God gives you success in the work, you will be driven to assign all the glory to Him, because none of the credit can really belong to you. If you don't have success, humility will lead you to blame your own foolishness and weakness, not God's sovereignty. Why should God give blessing, and then let you run away with the glory of it? The glory of the salvation of souls belongs to Him and Him alone. Why should you try to steal it?

Many attempt to steal this glory for themselves with words like, "When I was preaching at such-and-such a place, fifteen people came to me at the close of the service and thanked me for the sermon I had preached." You and your blessed sermon be hanged. I might have used a stronger word if I had liked, for you are worthy of condemnation whenever you take honor for yourself which belongs only to God.

Remember the story of the young prince who came into the room where he thought his dying father was sleeping and placed the king's crown on his head to see how it would fit him. The king, who was actually watching him said, "Wait a little while, my son, wait till I am dead."

So, when you feel any inclination to put the crown of glory on your head, just imagine that you hear God saying, “Wait till I am dead, before you try on My crown.” Since that will never be the case, you had better leave the crown alone and let Him to whom it rightfully belongs wear it. Our song must always be, Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth (Psalm 115:1).

Some men who never entertained humility have been released from the ministry, for the Lord will not use those unwilling to attribute the honor entirely to Himself. Humility is one of the chief qualifications for usefulness. Many have been passed over on the list of useful men, because they have fallen into the snare of the Devil and are exalted with pride.

Perhaps, you feel that as a poor student you have no chance of falling into this sin. Actually, it is quite possible. In fact, with some broke students there is all the more danger, for one reason. You may fall into pride if God blesses and places you in a prominent position.

You see, a man brought up in a circle of fine society all his life doesn’t feel the change as much when he reaches a position others would consider a great elevation. In the case of certain men, whom I could name, I feel a great mistake was made. As soon as they were converted, they were taken right out of their former associations and set before the public as popular preachers. It’s a great pity that many made little kings of these preachers and, in so doing, prepared the way for their fall. You see, they couldn’t bear the sudden change. It would have been better for them if everybody had bucked and abused them for ten or twenty years. It would have probably saved them from much misery later.

I’m actually grateful for the rough treatment I received in my earlier days from all sorts of people. Back then, the moment I did anything good at all, they were at me like a pack of hounds. It gave me no time to sit down and boast about what I had done, for they continually ranted and rumbled at me. If I had been picked up all of a sudden and positioned where I am now, I probably would have gone back down again just as quickly. When you get out of college, it will be spiritually healthier for you if you are treated as I was.

On the other hand, if you enjoy great success, chances are it will turn your head if God doesn’t permit you to be afflicted in some way. If you are ever tempted to say, Is this not the great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the glory of my greatness? (Daniel 4:30) just remember Nebuchadnezzar, when he was driven from among men and ate grass as the oxen, and his body was bathed with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws (Daniel 4:33). God has many ways of bringing proud Nebuchadnezzar-like people down, and He can easily humble you, too, if you are ever lifted up with conceit.

This need of deep humility in a soul winner is clear in Scripture and doesn’t need any more proof, for everyone with half an eye can see that God is not likely to bless any man much unless he is truly humble.

Chapter 4

Living Faith

The next essential qualification for success in the work of the Lord is a vital one: a living faith. Remember how the Lord Jesus Christ couldn't do many mighty works in His own country because of the unbelief of the people? It is equally true that, with some men, God can't do many mighty works because of their unbelief. If you will not believe, neither shall you be used of God. According to your faith be it unto you , is one of the unalterable laws of His kingdom (Matthew 9:29). If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove from here to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matthew 17:20). But if the question has to be asked, "Where is your faith?" the mountains will not move for you nor will even a poor sycamore tree be stirred from its place.

You must have faith about your call to the ministry. You must believe without question that you are really chosen of God to be a minister of the gospel of Christ. If you firmly believe God has called you to preach the gospel, you will preach it with courage and confidence. You will go to work because you have a right to do it. However, if you have an idea that you are possibly nothing but an interloper, you will accomplish nothing of any account. You will only be a poor, limping, hesitant, half-apologetic preacher, and no one will care for your message.

You better not begin to preach until you are quite sure God has called you to the work. A man once wrote to ask me whether he should preach or not. When I don't know how to reply to someone, I try to give as wise an answer as I possibly can. Accordingly, this is what I wrote to this man: "Dear Friend, If the Lord has opened your mouth, the Devil can't shut it. But if the Devil has opened it, may the Lord shut it!"

Six months later, I met the man, and he thanked me for my letter, which he said greatly encouraged him to go on preaching.

"How was that?" I asked.

"You said, 'If the Lord has opened your mouth, the devil can't shut it.'"

I nodded. "Yes, I did, but I also added the other side of the question."

"Oh! That part didn't relate to me."

We can always find advice to suit our own ideas if we know how to interpret it. If you have genuine faith in your call to the ministry, you will be ready, with Luther, to preach the gospel even while standing between the great teeth of leviathan's jaws.

You must also believe the message you have to deliver is God's Word. I'd rather you believed half-a-dozen truths intensely than a hundred without strength of conviction. If your hand isn't large enough to hold a great deal, hold firmly what you can. If it came to a match of push and shove, and we were all allowed to carry away as much gold as we could take from a heap, it might not be of much use to have a big purse. Because in the scuffle, the one who closed his hand tightly on as much as he could conveniently hold and not let it go, would come off best.

Sometimes it might be best for us to imitate the boy in the ancient fable who put his hand into a narrow-necked jar, grasped as many nuts as he could hold, but couldn't get even one of them out. When he let half of them go, his hand came out easily. We must do the same, because we

can't hold everything. It is quite impossible. Our hand isn't big enough.

When we grasp anything, we must hold it fast and grip it tightly. Believe what you say you believe, or you will never persuade anybody else to believe it. If you adopt a style that says, "I think this is a truth, and as a young man I beg you to kindly pay attention to what I am about to say… I am merely suggesting…" and so on. If that is your mode of preaching, you'll be breeding doubters the easiest way possible.

I would rather hear you say, "Young as I am, what I have to say comes from God, and God's Word says so-and-so and so-and-so. There it is, and you must believe what God says or you will be lost."

The people who hear you will say, "That young fellow certainly believes what he is talking about." Very likely, some of them will be led to believe, too. God uses the faith of His ministers to breed faith in other people. Souls aren't saved by a minister who doubts, and the preaching of your own doubts and questions can never conceivably decide a soul for Christ. You must have great faith in the Word of God and in the power of that message to save people if you are to be winners of souls to those who hear it.

You may have heard the story of the first-year student who came to me and said, "I've been preaching now for some months, and I don't think I've had a single conversion."

I asked, "Do you expect the Lord is going to bless you and save souls every time you open your mouth? "

"No, sir."

"Well, then," I said, "that's why you don't see souls saved. If you believed, the Lord would give the blessing." I'd caught him quite nicely, but many would have answered me just as he did. They apprehensively believe it is possible, by some strange mysterious method, that once in a hundred sermons God might win a quarter of a soul. They have hardly enough faith to keep them standing upright in their boots, so how can they expect God to bless them?

I like to go to the pulpit feeling that I am going to deliver God's Word in His name. It can't return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). I have asked His blessing upon it, and He is bound to give it. His purposes will be accomplished, whether my message is a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death to those who hear it, to the one we are the savour of death unto death and to the other the savour of life unto life (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Now, if this is how you feel, what happens if souls are not saved? Special prayer-meetings will be called to seek to know why the people don't come to Christ. You will schedule seeker meetings for those who are anxious to understand more. Along with all this, you shall meet people displaying a joyful countenance, because they see you are expecting a blessing. At the same time, you will let them know you will be grievously disappointed unless the Lord gives you conversions.

While this is how things should be, what do we see in many places? Nobody prays much about the matter, no meetings are called for crying to God for a blessing, and the minister never encourages the people to come and tell him about the work of grace in their souls. I tell you this, he has his reward. He gets what he asked for and receives what he expected. His Master gives him his penny but nothing else.

The command is, Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it (Psalm 81:10). Yet, here we sit with closed lips waiting for the blessing. Open your mouth with a full expectation, a firm belief, and according to your faith so shall it be given to you (Matthew 9:29).

That is the essential point. You must believe in God and in His gospel if you are to be a winner of souls. Some other things may be omitted, but when it comes to this matter of faith it must never be. It is true that God doesn't always measure His mercy by our unbelief, for He has to think of other people as well as of us. But looking at the matter in a common-sense way, it does seem that the most likely instrument to do the Lord's work is the man who expects God

will use him and who goes forth to labor in the strength of that conviction. When success comes, he isn't surprised, because he looked for it with expectation. He sowed living seed, and he expected to reap a harvest from it. He cast his bread upon the waters, and he intends to search and watch until he finds it again (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Thorough Earnestness

Once more, if a man is to succeed in his ministry and win many souls, he must be characterized by thorough earnestness. Don't we all know men who preach in such a lifeless manner that it's highly improbable anybody will ever be affected by what they say? I was present when a good man asked the Lord to bless the sermon he was about to deliver to bring about the conversion of sinners. I don't wish to limit omnipotence, but I don't believe God could bless that sermon he preached to any sinner unless He made the hearer misunderstand what the minister said. It was one of those "bright poker sermons" as I call them. You know how in some drawing-rooms there are pokers kept for show to be looked at but never used. If you ever tried to poke the fire with them, you'd catch it from the lady of the house.

These sermons are just like those pokers, polished up, bright, and cold. They seem as if they might have more in common with people in the stars, because they certainly have no connection with anyone in this world. What good comes from such discourses? No one can tell, but I feel sure there isn't enough power in them to kill a cockroach or a spider. Certainly, there is no power in them to bring a dead soul to life. With some sermons, it's quite true that the more you think of them, the less you think of them. If any poor sinner goes to hear them with the hope of getting saved, you can only say that the minister is more likely to stand in the way of his going to heaven than to point him to the right road.

You can count on it that you can make men understand the truth if you really want to do so, but if you aren't absolutely in earnest it isn't likely they will be. For instance, if a man knocked at my door in the middle of the night, and I stuck my head out of the window to see what was the matter, and he answered in a very quiet, unconcerned way, "There is a fire at the back part of your house." I'd entertain very little thought of any fire. Instead, I'd feel inclined to empty a jug of water over him.

If I'm walking along, and a man comes up to me and says, in a cheerful tone of voice, "Good afternoon, sir, do you know that I am starving? I haven't tasted food for ever so long."

My reply would be something like, "My good fellow, you seem quite at ease. I don't believe you lack for much, or you wouldn't be so unconcerned about it."

Some men seem to preach in this fashion, "My dear friends, this is Sunday, so here I am. I have spent time in my study all week, and now I hope you will listen to what I have to say to you. I don't know if there's anything in it that particularly concerns you. It might have some connection with the man in the moon, but I understand some of you are in danger of going to a certain place which I don't wish to mention. Let me just say that I hear it's not a nice place for even a temporary residence. I mainly preach to you that Jesus Christ did something or other, which in some way or other has something to do with salvation. And if you pay attention to what you do" – and so on – "it is possible that you will" – and so on and so on.

In other words, this is the full summary of many a discourse. Nothing in that vein of talk can do anybody any good. After the man keeps on in that style for three-quarters of an hour, he closes by saying, "Now it's time to go home." And he hopes the deacons will pay him for his services. That sort of thing won't do. We didn't come into the world to waste our own time or other people's in that way.

I hope we were born for something better than to be mere bits of husk in the porridge which are neither good nor harmful, like the man I have described. Just imagine God sending a man into the world to try to win souls who has such a stylistic tendency in the entire spirit of his life.

Some ministers are constantly being talked about for doing nothing. They preach two sermons of an inferior sort on Sunday and say the effort almost wears them out. Along with this, they make short pastoral visitations, which amount to drinking a cup of tea and making small talk. All this is void of passionate agony for souls. There's no "Woe! Woe!" on their hearts and lips showing grief, sorrow, or misery. It comes down to the fact that they lack focus and a true zeal in God's service.

If the Lord sweeps such men away, if He cuts them down like cumberers, it will be no surprise. The Lord Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem, and you will have to weep over sinners if they are to be saved through you, And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it (Luke 19:41). You must be earnest. Put your whole soul into the work or else give it up .

Great Simplicity of Heart

Another qualification that is essential to soul winning is great simplicity of heart. I don't know whether I can thoroughly explain what I mean by this, but I will try to make it clear by contrasting it with something else. I'm sure you know some men who are too wise to be just simple believers. They've gained so much knowledge that they don't believe things which are plain and simple. Their souls have been fed so daintily that they can't live on anything but exotic foods like Chinese birds'-nest, caviar, and such luxuries. No milk fresh from a cow is ever good enough for them, because they are far too refined to drink such a beverage. Everything they have must be unique and unrivalled.

God doesn't bless these attractive spiritual aristocrats who dress like puppets and carry their character on their back. No. As soon as you see them, be ready to say, "They may do well enough as Lord So-and-so's servants, but they are not the men to do God's work. For God isn't likely to employ such grand gentlemen."

When they select a text, they never explain its true meaning. Instead, they go 'round about to find something the Holy Spirit never intended to convey by it. When they get hold of one of their precious new thoughts – oh, my! What a fuss they make over it.

The reality is that such a man is like one who has found a stale herring. What a treat. It is so odoriferous. Now we shall hear of this stale herring for the next six months, until somebody else finds another. And what a loud voice they use to set up their presentation. "Glory! Glory! Glory! Here is a new thought!" And it doesn't stop there. A new book comes out about it, and all these great men go sniffing around it to prove what deep thinkers and wonderful men they are. God doesn't bless that kind of wisdom. This wisdom is not that which descends from above, but is earthly, natural, diabolical (James 3:15).

By simplicity of heart, I mean that a man clearly goes into the ministry for the glory of God, the winning of souls, and nothing else. Some men would like to win souls and glorify God if it could be done with suitable regard to their own interests. They would be delighted, oh, yes, very pleased indeed, to extend the kingdom of Christ if the kingdom of Christ would give full representation to their amazing powers. They'd go in for soul winning if it would persuade people to unharness the horses in order to step in and draw the carriage carrying them through the street in triumph, just so people will think they must be somebody. You see, they must be known, they must be talked about, they must hear people say, "What a splendid man that is!" Of course, they give God the glory after they've sucked the juice out of it, but they must have the orange themselves first.

Unfortunately, that sort of spirit is found even among ministers, and God can't endure it. He is not going to have a man's leftovers, because He will have all the glory or none at all. If a man seeks to serve himself, to get honor for himself, rather than seeking to serve God and honor Him alone, the Lord Jehovah won't use that man [1] . A man who is to be used by God must believe what he does is for the glory of God and have no other motive. Regrettably, when

outsiders go to hear some preachers, all they remember is that they were great actors. The fact is, they should be a very different kind of man – one who after someone has heard him preach, they don't think about how he looked, or how he spoke, but about the solemn truths he spoke.

Another man rolls out what he has to tell in such a fashion that those who listen to him say to one another, "Don't you see that he lives by his preaching? It's his job – how he makes his living." I would rather hear it said, "That man said something in his sermon that made many people think less of him and more of God. He voiced some distasteful sentiments and did nothing but drive at us with the Word of the Lord all the while he preached. All he cared about was bringing us to repentance and faith in Christ." That is the kind of man whom the Lord delights to bless.

I prefer to see men like those to whom I have said, "Right now you're earning a good salary and are likely to rise to a position of influence in the world. If you give up your job and go into Bible college, you will very likely be a poor Baptist minister all your life." After I have said this, they've looked up and said, "I'd sooner starve and win souls than spend my life in any other calling."

Most of you reading this book are such people. You must never have an eye for the glory of God and the fat sheep for yourself. It must never be God's glory and your own honor and esteem among men. That won't do, not even if you preach to please God and an attractive woman. It must be God's glory alone, nothing less and nothing else, not even a good looking woman. As the sea snail clings to the rock, so is such a woman to the minister. It won't do for him to even think of pleasing her. With true simplicity of heart, he must seek to please God, whether men and women are pleased or not .

Complete Surrender of Yourself to God

Lastly, there must be a complete surrender of yourself to God. What I mean by this is that from this time forward, you should wish to think God's thoughts and not your own thoughts. You should determine to preach nothing of your own invention but only from God's Word. To go even further, resolve not even to deliver that truth in your own way but only in God's way. Suppose you read your sermons when you deliver your message. I know this isn't very likely, but if you did, your desire should be not to write anything except what is entirely according to the Lord's mind. When you get hold of a fine big word, ask yourself whether it's likely to be a spiritual blessing to your people. If you think it wouldn't be, leave it out. Then there's that grand bit of poetry that, even though you couldn't understand it, you felt you couldn't omit. But when asked whether it was likely to be instructive to the rank and file of your people, you were forced to reject it.

Such gems found on a literary dust-heap must be added into the crown of your sermon, only if you want to show the people how industrious you have been. However, if you desire to leave yourself entirely in God's hands, it is probable you will be led to make some very simple statement, some banal remark, something with which everyone in the congregation is familiar. If you feel moved to put that into the sermon, by all means put it in, even if you have to leave out the big words, the poetry, and the gems. It may be that the Lord will bless that simple statement of the gospel to some poor sinner seeking the Savior.

Yield yourself unreservedly to the mind and will of God in this way and, eventually, when you get out into the ministry, you'll be compelled to use a peculiar expression at times or to offer an odd prayer, which at the time may seem a bit strange even to you. But it will all make sense to you afterwards, when someone comes to tell you that he never understood the truth until you put it in such an unusual way. You'll be more receptive to this influence if you thoroughly prepare for your work in the pulpit by study and prayer. I urge you always to make proper preparation and to even write out in full what you think you ought to say. However, don't deliver

it by memory like a pet parrot repeating what it has been taught. If you do that, you will certainly not be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I have no doubt you will sometimes feel there is a passage you must incorporate into your message – a fine piece by one of the British poets or a choice extract from some classic author. You'll no doubt read it to a college friend and even though you don't ask him to praise it, it's only because you're sure he couldn't help but do so. You think that you have very seldom heard anything equal to one particular piece in it, and you are sure that Mr. Punshon or Dr. Parker couldn't have done any better. In fact, you are quite certain that when the people hear your sermon, they will be obligated to feel there's something in it. However, it may be that the Lord will consider it "too good" to be blessed because there is too much in it.

Think of it like the host of men who were with Gideon. The Lord considered them too many. He couldn't give the Midianites into their hands, or they would brag about themselves and at the same time against Him by saying, "Our own might has gained us the victory." When twenty-two thousand of them had been sent away, the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are still too many." All of them had to be sent home except the three hundred men who lapped. Once He narrowed it down to this handful of men, the Lord said to Gideon, Arise and descend to the camp, for I have delivered it in thy hands (Judges 7:9).

So the Lord says about some of your sermons, "I can't do any good with them, they are too big." Consider that one you've prepared with the fourteen sections. Leave seven of them out, and then perhaps the Lord will bless it .

Someday it may happen, just when you are in the middle of your homily, that the Lord will bring a thought across your mind, and you will say to yourself, "Now, if I say this, that old deacon will make it uncomfortable for me. And there's a gentleman who just walked in who runs a school. He's an evaluator and will surely be displeased if I say this. Besides, those here include a remnant according to the election of grace, and the hyper Calvinists up in the gallery will give me one of those heavenly looks that are so full of meaning."

I encourage you to feel ready to say anything God gives you to say, irrespective of all the consequences and regardless of what the "hypers," or their counterpart "lowpers," or anybody else will think or do.

One of the principal qualifications of a great artist's brush is its yielding of itself to him, so he can do what he likes with it. A harpist will love to play on one particular harp, because he knows the instrument, and the instrument almost appears to know him. So, when God puts His hand upon the very strings of your being, and every power within you seems to respond to the movements of His hand, you are an instrument He can use.

It's not easy to keep yourself in this condition – to remain in such a sensitive state that you receive the impression the Holy Spirit desires to convey and are instantly influenced by Him. If there is a great ship out at sea and a tiny ripple moves across the waters, the great ship is not moved by it in the least. Even if a moderate wave comes, the vessel doesn't feel it. However, consider the "unsinkable" but ill-fated SS Great Eastern which sits still within the embrace of the deep.

Just look over the bulwarks and out at the sea. See those corks playing upon the surface of the water down there? If even a fly drops into the water, they feel the motion and dance upon the tiny wave. May you be as mobile beneath the power of God as the cork is on the surface of the sea. I am sure this self-surrender is one of the essential qualifications for a preacher who is to be a winner of souls. Something must be said if you are to be the means of saving that man in the corner, and woe to you if you aren't ready to say it. Woe to you if you are afraid to say it. Woe to you if you are ashamed to say it. And woe to you if you don't dare to say it, because somebody up in the gallery might complain that you were too earnest, too enthusiastic, or too zealous.

These seven things are the qualifications Godward, which I think would come to mind if you tried to put yourself into the position of the Most High and considered what you would wish to have in those whom you employed in the winning of souls. May God give all of us these qualifications, for Christ's sake.

[1] Publisher's Note: While we in no way advocate wrong motives in preaching, it should be noted that God does seem to do some good through those individuals, though they surely will suffer loss themselves: Some indeed preach the Christ even out of envy and strife, but others also out of good will. Some preach the Christ out of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add tribulation to my bonds, but the others out of charity, knowing that I am placed here for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, and will even rejoice (Philippians 1:15-18).

Chapter 5

Qualifications for Soul Winning – Manward

In the previous section on soul winning, I spoke about the qualifications, Godward, that would fit a man as a soul winner. In it, I tried to describe the kind of man the Lord is most likely to use in the winning of souls.

In this section, we will take a look at the characteristics of a soul winner, manward – characteristics which communicate effectively with your fellow man. I might point out that almost the very same points I detailed in the previous section will also be those which will best connect manward. This is because those qualities which commend themselves to the notice of God are most adapted to the conclusion He desires. They are also likely to be approved by the object acted upon – the soul of man.

An Ignoramus Is Not Likely to be Much of a Soul Winner

Many men in the world are not tailored for this work. First, let me say that an ignoramus is not likely to be much of a soul winner. A man who only knows he is a sinner and that Christ is a Savior may be very useful to others in the same condition as himself. It is his duty to do the best he can with what little knowledge he possesses. But on the whole, I shouldn't expect such a man to be used in the service of God in a big way. Over time, if he experienced a broader and deeper familiarity, he could use his knowledge for the good of others. However, if he stays ignorant of the things of God to a great extent, I don't see how he can make them known to other people.

Honestly, there must be some light in the candle which is to lighten men's darkness, and there must be some information in the man who is to be a teacher to others. The man who is almost or altogether ignorant, no matter how much he desires to do good, must be left out of the race of great soul winners, because he is disqualified from even entering. With this in mind, let us all ask that we may be well instructed in the truth of God, and that we may be able to teach that truth to others too.

An Evident Sincerity

Granted, you don't belong to the ignorant class I have referred to, but suppose you are well instructed – what qualities must you have towards men if you are to win them for the Lord? I suggest we must have an evident sincerity about us. Notice I didn't only say sincerity but an "evident" sincerity which is obvious immediately to anyone who honestly looks for it. It must be quite clear to your hearers that you have a firm belief in the truths you are preaching. Otherwise, you will never make them believe. Unless they are convinced beyond all doubt that you believe these truths, there will be no effectiveness or power in your preaching.

If you have only a feeble appreciation of the gospel you profess to deliver, it is impossible for those who hear your proclamation to be greatly influenced by it. No one must suspect you of proclaiming to others what you do not fully believe yourself. If that is ever the case, your work will be of no effect. Instead, it must be evident to all who listen to you that you are exercising

one of the noblest skills and performing one of the most sacred functions ever brought down to man.

For example, the other day I overheard this discussion about a certain minister.

One fellow asked, “Did he preach a good sermon?”

The person replied, “What he said was very good.”

“But did you benefit from the sermon?”

“No, not in the slightest.”

“Wasn’t it a good sermon?”

Again the person said, “What he said was very good.”

“What do you mean? If what the preacher said was very good, why didn’t you benefit from the sermon?”

The listener explained it this way. “I didn’t benefit, because I didn’t believe in the man who delivered it. He was simply an actor performing a part. I didn’t believe he felt what he preached, and I don’t think he cared whether or not we felt or believed it.”

Where such a state as this exists, the hearers can’t be expected to profit from the sermon, no matter what the preacher says. Preachers like this can try to impress that the truths spoken are precious. They can think their listeners will feed upon what’s provided just because they’ve set the dish before them, but it’s no use. They can’t do it, because they can’t separate the heartless speaker from the message he so carelessly delivers. As soon as a man lets his work become a matter of mere form or routine, it sinks into a performance in which the preacher is simply an actor. He is only acting a part, as he might in a play at the theatre, and not speaking from his inmost soul, as a man sent from God. I implore you to speak from your hearts or else don’t speak at all .

If you can be silent, be silent, but if you must speak for God, be thoroughly sincere about it. It would be better for you to go back to a secular job and weigh butter, sell reels of cotton, or do anything rather than pretend to be ministers of the gospel, unless God has called you to the work. I believe the most damnable thing a man can do is to preach the gospel merely as an actor and turn the worship of God into a kind of theatrical performance. Such a travesty is more worthy of the Devil than of God. Divine truth is far too precious to be made the subject of such a mockery. Once people suspect you are insincere, you can count on it that they won’t ever listen to you except with disgust, and they will not be likely to believe your message if you give them any reason to think you don’t believe it yourself.

I hope I’m not wrong in supposing that my readers are thoroughly sincere regarding our Master’s service. With this assumption in mind, I will proceed to what seems to me to be the next qualification, manward, for soul winning, and that is evident earnestness.

Evident Earnestness

The command to the man who would be a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy understanding, and thy neighbour as thyself (Luke 10:27). If a man is to be a soul winner, there must be in him intensity of emotion as well as sincerity of heart.

You can preach the most solemn warnings and the most dreadful threats in such an indifferent or careless way that no one will be affected by them in the least. In the same way, you can repeat the most demonstrative appeals in such a half-hearted manner that no one will be moved to love or fear. I believe that, for soul winning, this matter of earnestness is more critical than almost anything else. I have seen and heard some who were very poor preachers who still brought many souls to the Savior through the earnestness with which they delivered their message.

Those sermons offered positively nothing, other than to be used by the merchant to wrap

around his butter. Yet, those feeble sermons brought many to Christ. It wasn't what the preachers said, so much as how they said it, which carried conviction to the hearts of hearers. The intensity of the sermon and the emotion of the man who delivered it drove the simplest truth home with surprising effect.

If anyone reading this presented me with a cannon-ball, say one weighing fifty or a hundred pounds, and let me roll it across the room, and another person entrusted me with a bullet and a rifle which could fire it, I know which would be the more effective of the two. Let no man despise the little bullet, because very often that's the one that kills the sin and kills the sinner too. So it isn't the bigness of the words you use but the force with which you deliver them that decides the outcome of what you say. I have heard of a ship that was fired at by the cannon in a fort, but no impact was made until the general in command gave the order for the balls to be made red-hot. That made the difference which sent the vessel to the bottom of the sea in three minutes.

This is what you must do with your sermons, make them red-hot. Never mind if men say you are too enthusiastic or even too fanatical. Give them red-hot shot, because there's nothing else half as good for the purpose you have in view. We don't go out snow-balling on Sundays, we go fire-balling in order to hurl grenades into the enemy's ranks.

What devotion and fervor our topic deserves. We have to tell of an earnest Savior, an earnest heaven, and an earnest hell. How serious we ought to be when we remember that in our work we deal with souls that are immortal, with sin that is eternal in its effects, with pardon that is infinite, and with terrors and joys that will last forever and ever. If a man isn't intensely sincere when dealing with such a subject as this, can he possess a heart at all? Could one be discovered even with a microscope? If he were dissected, nothing more than a pebble would probably be found, a heart of stone incapable of emotion. I trust that when God gave us hearts of flesh for ourselves, He gave us hearts that could feel for other people also.

Evident Love to Hearers

These qualities being assumed as true, the next which is necessary for a man to be a soul winner is that he should have an evident love to his hearers. I can't imagine a man being a winner of souls when he spends most of his time mistreating his congregation and talking as if he hates the very sight of them. Such men seem happy only when they are emptying vials of wrath over those who have the unhappiness of listening to them. I heard of a brother preaching from the text, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves (Luke 10:30). He began his discourse like this: "I don't say that this man came to the place where we are, but I do know another man who did come to this place and fell among thieves." You can easily guess the results of throwing about such maliciousness.

I know of another who preached from the passage, And Aaron was silent (Leviticus 10:3). One who heard him said, "The difference between him and Aaron is that Aaron held his peace, and the preacher does not. On the contrary, he raves at the people with all his might."

You must have a real desire for the good of the people if you are to have much influence over them. Even dogs and cats love the people who love them. Human beings are much the same as these dumb animals. People quickly get to know when a cold man gets behind the pulpit – one of those who seem to be carved out of a block of marble.

I've seen one or two of that kind of brother who have never succeeded anywhere. When I asked the cause of their failure, in each case the reply has been, "He is a good man, a very good man. He preaches well, very well, but still we don't get along with him."

I have asked, "Why don't you like him?"

The reply has been, "Nobody ever did like him."

"Is he quarrelsome?"

"Oh! Dear no, I wish he would make a ruckus."

I did my best to fish out what the drawback was, because I was anxious to know. Finally, someone said, "Well, I don't think he has any heart…at least he doesn't preach or act as if does."

It's very sad when the failure of any ministry is caused by lack of heart. You ought to have a great big heart, like the harbor at Portsmouth or Plymouth, so all the people in your congregation can come and cast anchor in it and feel as if they are under the shelter of a great rock. Haven't you noticed that men with large hearts succeed in the ministry and win souls for Christ in proportion to the size of their heart? For instance, think of Dr. Brock. There was a mass of a man, one who had great kindness, tenderness, and compassion in a scriptural sense. What good is the minister who doesn't have this quality? I don't support the enlargement of flesh as a worthy goal, but I do say you must have big hearts if you are to win men to Jesus. You must be great-hearts if you are to lead many pilgrims to the Celestial City.

I have seen some very lean men who said they were perfectly holy, and I could almost believe they couldn't sin. You see they were like old bits of leather, and there didn't appear to be anything in them capable of sinning. I met one of these "perfect" brothers once, and he was just like a piece of sea-weed – not an ounce of humanity in him. I like to see a trace of humanity somewhere or other about a man. People, in general, like it too. They get on better with a man who has some human nature in him. Yes, human nature in some aspects is an awful thing, but when the Lord Jesus Christ took it and joined His own divine nature to it, He made a grand thing of it. Human nature is a noble thing when it's united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those men who keep themselves to themselves like hermits and live a supposed sanctified life of self-absorption are not likely to have any influence in the world or to do good to their fellow-man.

You must love people and willingly mix with them if you hope to be of service to them. Some ministers are really much better men than others. Yet, they don't accomplish as much good as those who are more human – those who go and sit down with people and make themselves at home with them as much as possible. It is possible for you to appear to be just a wee bit too good, to the point that people feel you are divine beings more fit to preach to angels, cherubim, and seraphim, than to the fallen sons of Adam.

Just be men among men. Keep yourselves clear of all their faults and vices, but mingle with them in perfect love and sympathy. By sympathy I mean feeling you would do anything in your power to bring them to Christ. In this way, you can say with the apostle Paul, Therefore, though I am free regarding everyone, yet I have made myself slave unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to those that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain those that are under the law; to those that are without law, as without law (being not without law of God, but under the law of Christ), that I might gain those that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to everyone, that I might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

Evident Unselfishness

The next qualification, manward, for soul winning is evident unselfishness. A man ceases to bring men to Christ as soon as he becomes known as a selfish man. Selfishness seems to be ingrained in some people. You see it at the table at home, in the house of God, everywhere. When such individuals come to deal with a church and congregation, their selfishness quickly manifests itself. They intend to get all they can. Although in the Baptist ministry, they don't often get much. I hope each one reading this is willing to say, "Let me have food and clothing, and I will be content" (1 Timothy 6:8). If you try to put the thought of money away from you totally, the money often comes back to you doubled. However, if you seek to grab and hold on to all you can¸ you'll likely find it won't come to you at all. And selfishness isn't just limited to money. Those who are selfish in the matter of salary will be the same in everything else. They won't want their people to know anyone who can preach better than them, and they can't bear to hear

of any good work going on except in their own chapel. If a revival at another place sees souls being saved, they say with a sneer, “Sure there are many converts, but what are they? Where will they be in a few months’ time?” They think far more of their own gain of one new member per year than of their neighbor’s hundred at one time.

If your people see that kind of selfishness in you, you will soon lose influence over them. If you make up your mind to be a great man, no matter who has to be thrust to the side, you will go to the dogs as sure as you are alive. What do you think you are? Do you really think people should bow down and worship you? How can you think there is no one besides you in all the world when it comes to winning souls? Let me explain it this way. The less you think of yourself, the more people will think of you. And the more you think of yourself, the less people will think of you. If you have any trace of selfishness about you, pray to get rid of it at once. Or you will never be a fit instrument for winning souls for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6

Holiness of Character

Another thing wanted in a soul winner is holiness of character. It's no use talking about "the higher life" on Sundays only to live the lower life on week days. A Christian minister must be very careful, not only to be innocent of actual wrong-doing, but also not to be a cause of offense to weaker members of the flock. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient (1 Corinthians 10:23). We should never to do anything we judge to be wrong, but we must also be willing to abstain from things which might not be wrong in themselves – things which might be an occasion of stumbling to others, It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine nor do any thing by which thy brother stumbles or is offended or is sick (Romans 14:21). When people see we not only preach about holiness but strive to be holy men, they will be drawn toward holy things by our character as well as by our preaching.

Seriousness of Manner

If we are to be soul winners, there must be a seriousness of manner about us . Some people are serious by nature. For example, a gentleman in a railway carriage overheard a conversation between two of the passengers. One of them said, "I think the Church of Rome has great power and is likely to succeed with the people because of the evident holiness of her ministers. For instance, there's the Cardinal who looks like a skeleton because of his long fasting and prayers. He has almost reduced himself to skin and bone. Whenever I hear him speak, I instantly feel the power of the holiness of the man. Now look at Spurgeon, he eats and drinks like an ordinary mortal. I wouldn't give a pin to hear him preach."

His friend listened to him patiently and quietly said, "Did it ever dawn on you that the Cardinal's appearance might be accounted for by the fact that his liver isn't functioning properly? I don't think it's grace that makes him as lean as he is, I believe it's his liver."

I tell this story to also point out that some people naturally have a melancholy disposition. They are always very serious, but it's not a sign of grace. It's only an indication that their livers are out of order. They never laugh. In fact, they think it wicked to do so. But the result is that they go about the world increasing the misery of human kind, which is dreadful enough already without them adding their unnecessary portion. Such people evidently imagine they are predestinated to pour buckets of cold water upon all human levity and joy. So, if you are very serious, you mustn't always attribute it to grace, for it may be due to the state of your natural inclination.

Most of us, however, are far more inclined to laughter which works good like medicine, A joyful heart shall do good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones (Proverbs 17:22). We all need cheerfulness if we are to comfort and lift up those who are cast down. However, God won't use us to bring many souls to Christ if we are full of a lighthearted flippancy which characterizes some men. In such cases, people will say, "It's all a joke! Just listen to how those young fellows joke about religion. It's one thing to listen to them when they're in the pulpit but quite another matter when listening to them sitting around the supper table."

I heard about a dying man who sent for the minister to come see him. When the minister came in, the dying man said, “Do you remember a young man walking with you one evening, some years ago, when you were going out to preach?” The minister did not. The dying man said, “I remember it very well.”

The dying man went on to ask, “Do you remember preaching at such-and-such a village, from such-and-such a text, and after the service a young man walked home with you?”

“Oh, yes, I remember that very well!”

“Well, I’m the young man who walked home with you that night. I remember your sermon, I will never forget it.”

“Thank God for that,” the preacher said.

“No.” The dying man shook his head weakly. “You won’t thank God when you’ve heard all I have to say. I walked with you to the village, but you didn’t say much to me on the way there, because you were thinking over your sermon. You deeply impressed me while you were preaching, and I thought about giving my heart to Christ. I wanted to speak to you about my soul on the way home, but the moment you got out of church you cracked a joke. In fact, all the way back, you made such fun of serious subjects that I couldn’t say anything about what I felt. It left me thoroughly disgusted with religion and all who professed it. Now I’m going to be damned, and my blood will lie at your door as sure as you are alive.” He took his last breath and passed out of the world. No one wants anything of that sort to happen to them, so be careful and pay attention that you don’t create an opportunity for it. There must be a prevailing seriousness about the entirety of our lives, otherwise we can’t hope to lead others to Christ.

Great Deal of Tenderness

Finally, if we are to be much-used of God as soul winners, there must be a great deal of tenderness in our hearts. I like a man to have an appropriate amount of holy boldness, but I don’t care to see him cocky and impudent. Nor should a young man go into a pulpit apologizing for attempting to preach and hoping the people will bear with him. He should never act as if he doesn’t know if he has anything particular to say or even if the Lord had sent him. If he says he “might” have had some message and feels too young and inexperienced to speak positively about anything, such talk will never save a mouse, much less an immortal soul. If the Lord has sent you to preach the gospel, why should you make apologies? Ambassadors don’t apologize when they go to a foreign court. They know their ruler has sent them, and they deliver their message with all the authority of king and country behind them. Nor is it worthwhile for you to call attention to your youth. You are only a trumpet of the ram’s horn. It doesn’t matter whether you were pulled off the ram’s head yesterday or twenty-five years ago. If God blows through you, there will be noise enough and something more than noise. If He does not, nothing will come of the blowing.

When you preach, speak out straightforward but be very tender about it. If something unpleasant needs to be addressed, take care that you put it in the kindest possible way. I remember a time when some brothers had a message to deliver to a Christian brother. When they went to him, they put it so awkwardly that he was grievously offended. When I spoke to him about the same matter, he said, “I don’t mind your speaking to me. You have a way of putting an unpleasant truth so that a man can’t be offended with you, however much he may dislike the message you bring to him.”

I said, “But I put the matter just as strongly as the others did.”

“Yes, you did,” he replied, “but they said it in such a nasty kind of a way that I couldn’t stand it. I’d rather be blown up by you than praised by those other people!”

The fact is, there’s a way of doing such things so that the person reproved feels positively grateful to you. One may kick a man downstairs in such a fashion that he will rather like it. While

another may open a door in such an offensive way that you don't want to go through till he is out of the way.

If I have to tell anyone certain unpalatable, but necessary, truths he should know if his soul is to be saved, it's an uncompromising necessity for me to be faithful to him. Yet, I will try to deliver my message in such a way that he won't be offended by it. Then, if he does take offense, the probability is that he will not, but if he must, what I say will still take effect upon his conscience.

I know some who preach as if they were prizefighters. Throughout the sermon, they appear to be challenging someone to come up and fight them, and they are never happy except when they are laying into somebody. There's a man who often preaches on Clapham Common. He does it in such a threatening manner that the unbelievers he assaults can't endure it, and fights and rows frequently break out. Some preach in a way that grabs the attention of their listeners. But if some men were allowed to preach in heaven, I am afraid they'd set the angels fighting.

I know a number of ministers of this type. One in particular has preached at over a dozen places during his short ministerial life. You can tell where he has been by the ruin he leaves behind. He always finds churches that, in his opinion, are in a sad state and begins to purify them immediately – that is, to destroy them. As a general rule, the first thing he tosses out is the principal deacon. Next, away go all the leading families. Before long, the man has purified the place so effectually that the few people who are left can't keep him. As a result, off he goes to another place and repeats this destructive process.

He is a kind of spiritual ship scuttler who is never happy except when he's boring a hole through the planks of some good vessel. He says he believes the ship is unsound, so he bores and bores until, just as she is going down, he slips off and gets aboard another vessel, which very soon sinks in the same manner. He feels he is called to the work of separating the precious from the vile, and a preciously vile mess he makes of it. I have no reason to believe it is the condition of the liver in this case. Instead, it's more likely something wrong with his heart. Without a doubt, he suffers with an evil disease that always puts me into a bad mood with him. It's dangerous to entertain him more than three days, because he would end up quarreling with the most peaceable man in the world within that time.

I never intend to recommend him to a pastorate again. Let him find a place himself, if he can. I believe, whatever place he goes will become like the spot where the foot of the Tartar's horse is put down. Grass will never grow there again.

According to the legend told about Mahomet, "In every human being," so the story goes, "there are two black drops of sin. The great prophet himself was not free from the common lot of evil, and so an angel was sent to take his heart and squeeze the two black drops of sin out of it." If you have even a drop of the type of nasty, bitter spirit like the one found in the young man I've just told you about, go to sea so you can get rid of it. Get those black drops out somehow while you are in college. If you have any malice, ill-will, or bad temper in you, pray the Lord to take it out of you now. Don't go into churches to fight as others have done .

Another brother says, "I'm not going to let people walk all over me. I'll take the bull by the horns." If you do, you will be a great fool. I've never felt called to do anything of the kind. Why not let the bull alone, to go where he likes? A bull is likely to project you into space if you meddle with his horns.

"Still," says another, "we must set things right."

This is true, but the best way to set things right is not to make them more wrong than they are. Nobody thinks of putting a mad bull into a china shop in order to get the china cleaned. A display of evil temper can't set anything right that is wrong in our churches. Take care always to speak the truth in love, and especially when you are rebuking sin, That the slave of the Lord should not be contentious, but be meek unto everyone, apt to teach, patient, that with

meekness they might teach those that resist, if God peradventure will grant unto them that they might repent and know the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

I believe soul winning is to be done by people of the character I have described. This will especially be the case when they are surrounded by people of a similar character. You want to get the very atmosphere in which you live and work permeated with this spirit before you can rightly expect the fullest and richest blessings. Therefore, may you and all those in your church be all that I have pictured, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

Chapter 7

Kinds of Sermons Most Likely to Convert People

As preachers, the discourses we should deliver, if we really want our hearers to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be saved, are a certain sort. We all agree, the Holy Spirit alone can convert a soul, and no one can enter into the kingdom of God except they are born again from above. All the work is done by the Holy Spirit, and we must not take credit for any part of the result of that work. It is the Spirit who works in man, creating a new creature to the eternal purpose of God.

Still, we can be instruments in His hands. He chooses to use instruments, and He chooses them for wise reasons. There must be an adaptation of means to the end, like when David went forth with the sling and stone to slay the giant, Goliath of Gath. Even though Goliath stood very tall, a stone from a sling can rise. And even though the giant wore protective armor with scarce vulnerability except in his forehead, that was the very place to hit him. When David chose to take a sling it wasn't so much because he had no other weapon, but because he had practiced slinging, as most boys do in some form or other. Then he chose a smooth stone, because he knew it would fit the sling. He took the right kind of stone to enter Goliath's head, so when he slung it at the giant, it struck him in the forehead, penetrated his brain, and brought him to the ground.

You will find that this principle of adaptation runs through the entire work of the Holy Spirit. If God wants a man to be the apostle of the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit selects the large-minded, well-trained, highly-educated Paul, because he was more fit for such work than the somewhat narrow, though strong-minded Peter, who proved to be better suited for preaching to the Jews. He was of far more use to the circumcised than he ever could have been among the uncircumcised Gentiles. Paul, in his place, is the right man. And Peter, in his place, is the right man. You may see a lesson for yourself in this principle. Seek to adapt your means to your end. God the Holy Spirit can convert a soul by any text of Scripture apart from your paraphrase, your comment, or your explanation. However, certain Scripture passages, as you know, are the best to present to the minds of unsaved sinners. If this is true in books, how much more is it so in your messages to those listening to you? This leads to the question as to which sermons are most likely to be blessed with the conversion of hearers?

Sermons Distinctly Aimed at Conversion

First, sermons most likely to be blessed with conversion of the hearers are sermons distinctly aimed at the conversion of the hearers. I heard a prayer, some time ago, from a minister who asked the Lord to save souls by the sermon he was about to deliver. I don't hesitate to say that God Himself couldn't bless the sermon to that end unless He made the people misunderstand all that the preacher said to them. The whole discourse was more suited to harden the sinner in his sin rather than to lead him to renounce it and seek the Savior. Nothing in it could be blessed to any hearer unless he turned it inside out or upside down. The sermon did me good only if I applied the principle used by a good old lady I once knew regarding the minister she was

obliged to hear. Her friend asked, “Why do you go to such a place?”

She said, “Well, there is no other place of worship to which I can go.”

“Then wouldn’t it be better to stay at home than to hear such stuff?” her friend asked.

“Perhaps so, but I like to go out to worship even if I get nothing by going. Sometimes you see a hen scratching all over a heap of rubbish to try to find some corn. She doesn’t find any, but it shows she’s looking for it and using the means she has at hand to get it. Plus, the exercise warms her.”

In other words, the old lady said that scratching over the poor sermons she heard was a blessing to her, because it exercised her spiritual faculties and warmed her spirit.

Sermons such as this can’t save souls unless God takes to ripening wheat by sending snow and ice and begins to illuminate the world by means of fog and clouds. Even the preacher himself doesn’t think anybody will be converted by them. If a hundred people, or half-a-dozen, were converted by such sermons, nobody would be more astonished than the preacher.

In fact, I know a man who was converted, or at least convicted, under the preaching of this type of minister. This man visited a church. As a result of the clergyman’s preaching, he fell under deep conviction of sin. He went down to see the minister, but the poor preacher didn’t know what to make of him. He said, “I am very sorry if something in my sermon made you uncomfortable. I didn’t mean it to be. ”

“Well, sir,” the troubled man answered, “you said we must be born again.”

“Oh! That was all done in baptism,’’ the clergyman replied.

The man with the convicted heart wasn’t to be put off. He said, “But, sir, in your sermon you spoke of the necessity of regeneration.”

“I’m very sorry I said anything to make you uncomfortable. Really, I think all is right with you. You’re a good sort of a fellow. You’ve never been a poacher or anything bad like that.”

“That may be, sir, but I have a sense of sin. You said we must be new creatures.”

“Well, well, my good man.” The parson looked at him with a perplexed expression. “I don’t understand such things. I’ve never been born again.” With that, he sent him to the Baptist minister, and the man is now a Baptist minister, partly as the result of what he learned from the preacher who didn’t understand the truth he had declared to others.

Of course, in His infinite sovereignty, God can convert a soul by such a sermon and by such a ministry, but it’s not likely. It’s more probable He’ll work in a place where a warm-hearted man is preaching the truth he has received personally – a man who earnestly desires the salvation of those listening to his message and is ready to guide them in the ways of the Lord as soon as they are saved. God doesn’t usually lay His new-born children down among people where the new life won’t be understood or where they will be left without proper nurture or care.

If you want your hearers to be converted, you must see that your preaching aims directly at conversion, and that your preaching is the kind God will likely bless in that way. When that is the case, look for souls to be saved and a great number of them too. Don’t be satisfied when a single soul is converted. Remember that the rule of the kingdom is: According to your faith be it unto you (Matthew 9:29) .

Last night, in my sermon in the Tabernacle, I was glad it wasn’t written, “According to thine unbelief, so be it unto thee.” If our faith is great, God gives us blessing according to our faith. If only we were rid of unbelief altogether, believed great things of God, and preached with heart and soul, so men were likely to be converted by proclaiming truths apt to convert them. If our faith is great, we declare these truths in a manner likely to be blessed to the conversion of our hearers. Of course, all the while, we must trust the Holy Spirit to make the work effectual, for we are only instruments in His hands.

Sermons Must Interest

Focusing a little closer on our subject, if people are to be saved, the sermons must interest them. First, you have to get them to come hear the gospel. At all events in London, people react with a great aversion to places of worship, and I'm not surprised that it's a concern to many churches and chapels. In many instances, I think the common people don't attend such services, because they don't understand the theological "lingo" used in the pulpit. It's neither English, nor Greek, but Double-dutch. When a working-man goes once and listens to these fine words, he says to his wife, "I won't go there again, Sal. There's nothing there for me, nor for you. There may be a good deal for a gentleman that's been to college, but there's nothing for the likes of us."

Instead of theological language, we must preach in what Whitefield used to call "market language" as if we have all classes of the community listening to our message. Then, when they do come in, we must preach in an interesting manner that captures their attention. People can't be converted while asleep. If you put them to sleep, they'd have been better off at home in bed where they can sleep more comfortably .

The minds of our hearers must be awake and active if we are to do them any real good. When hunting, you won't shoot birds unless you get them to fly. You must flush them from the long grass in which they are hiding. I would sooner use a little of what some very proper preachers regard as a dreadful thing, that wicked thing called humor. I'd rather wake the congregation up with humor than have it said that I droned on until we all went to sleep together.

It may be quite right, at times, to have it said of us as it was said of Rowland Hill, "What does that man mean to accomplish? He actually made the people laugh while he was preaching."

"Yes," was the wise answer, "but didn't you see that he also made them cry right after that?" That was good work and well done. I sometimes tickle my oyster until he opens his shell. Then I slip the knife in. He wouldn't have opened for my knife, but he did for something else, and that's the way to do it with people. They must be made to open their eyes, and ears, and souls. When you get them open, you must feel, Now's my opportunity; in with the knife . There's one vulnerable spot in the hides of those rhinoceros sinners that come to hear you. If you get a shot through that weak spot, take care that it's with a thorough gospel bullet, for nothing else will accomplish the work that needs to be done.

Besides, the people must be interested in order to make them remember what is said. They won't remember what they hear unless the subject interests them. They forget our fine speeches, they can't recall our pretty pieces of poetry – I don't know if they would do them any good if they did remember them – but we must tell our hearers something they will not likely forget. I believe in what Father Taylor calls "the surprise power of a sermon." This is something unexpected by those listening. Just when they think you're sure to say something very precise and straightforward, say something awkward and crooked. Why? Because they'll remember that. In so doing, you will have tied a gospel knot where it is likely to remain.

I remember reading about a tailor who promised to tell his fellow tailors how he had made his fortune. They gathered around his bed when he was dying. As they all listened attentively he said, "Now I will tell you tailors how to make your fortunes…. Always put a knot in your thread."

I give that same advice to preachers reading this book, always put a knot in your thread. If there's a knot in the thread, it doesn't slip out of the material. Some preachers put in the needle all right. But without a knot in their thread, it passes through, and they haven't really accomplished anything after all.

Put a good many knots in your sermons to increase the probability that they'll remain in your hearer's memories. You don't want your preaching to be like sewing done by some machines, in which, if one stitch breaks the whole seam comes undone. A sermon ought to have plenty of burrs . Mr. Fergusson can tell you what burrs are. I'm sure he has often found them clinging to

his coat in his bonnie Scotland. Put these burrs all over your listeners by saying something that will strike them, something that will stick to them for many days and be likely to bless them. I believe a sermon, under God's smile, is likely to be the means of conversion if it's interesting to the hearers as well as directly aimed at their salvation.

Must Be Instructive

The third thing in a sermon likely to win souls to Christ is: it must be instructive. If people are to be saved by a sermon, it must deliver at least some measure of knowledge. It must offer light as well as fire. Some preachers are all light and no fire. Others are all fire and no light. What we want is both fire and light. I don't judge those who are all fire and fury, but I wish they had a little more knowledge regarding what they talk about. I think it would be better if they didn't begin quite so soon to preach what they hardly understand themselves.

It's a fine thing to stand up in the street and cry, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" But what have we to believe? What's all the noise about? Preachers of this sort are like a little crying boy who stopped crying in the middle of his cry, because something distracted him. It leaves him asking, "Ma, please, what was I crying about?" Without a doubt, emotion is a proper element in the pulpit, and the feeling, the sorrow, and the power of heart are good and grand things in the right place. However, you must also use your brains a little, so be sure to tell the people something when you stand up to preach the everlasting gospel.

Sermons most likely to convert people seem to be those full of truth – truth about the fall, truth about the law, truth about human nature and its alienation from God, truth about Jesus Christ, truth about the Holy Spirit, truth about the everlasting Father, truth about the new birth, truth about obedience to God and how we learn it, and all such great truths. Whenever you preach, tell your hearers something, tell them something, tell them something.

Of course, some good may come even if your hearers don't understand you. I suppose it could happen, for there was an esteemed lady speaking to the friends gathered at the Devonshire House meeting. She was a most gracious woman and addressed the English friends in Dutch, so she asked one of the brothers to translate for her. However, the hearers said there was so much power and spirit about her speaking that, even though it was in Dutch, they didn't want it translated, because they were getting as much good out of it as possible.

Now, these hearers are men of a different mold from me, because I don't mind how good a woman the esteemed lady was. If I were there, I would want to know what she was talking about. And I'm sure I wouldn't have profited in the least unless it had been translated. In the same way, I always like ministers to know what they are talking about and to be sure something in the sermon is worth saying. In your sermons, try to give your hearers something beside a string of pathetic anecdotes that will set them crying. Tell the people something. You are to teach them, to preach the gospel to your hearers. You are to make them understand (as far as you can) the things which should result in their peace. We can't expect people to be saved by our sermons unless we try to really instruct them by what we say to them.

People Must Be Impressed

Fourthly, the people must be impressed by our sermons if they are to be converted. They mustn't only be interested, and instructed – they must be impressed. I believe there's a great deal more to impressive sermons than some people think. In order for you to impress the Word upon those to whom you preach, it must be impressed upon you first. You must feel it yourself and speak as a man who feels it, not as if you feel it, but because you feel it. Otherwise, it won't be felt by others.

I wonder what it must be like to go up into the pulpit and read somebody else's sermon to the congregation. We read in the Bible of one thing that was borrowed, and the head of that axe

came off (2 Kings 6:4). I'm afraid that the same thing often happens with borrowed sermons – the heads come off. Men who read borrowed sermons positively know nothing about the perplexities of preparing for the pulpit or the joy in preaching with only the aid of brief notes.

A dear friend of mine, who reads his own sermons, talked to me about preaching. I told him how my own soul is moved and my heart stirred when I think of what I shall say to my people. I also mentioned the same thing happens again when I deliver my message. He said he never felt anything of the kind when he preached, which reminded me of the little girl who cried because her teeth ached. Her grandmother said, "Lily, I wonder why you aren't ashamed to cry about such a small matter."

"Well, grandmother," the young girl said, "it's all very well for you to say that, because when your teeth ache you can take them out. Mine are fixed."

Some preachers, when the sermon they select doesn't run smoothly, can go to their box and take out another. But when I have a sermon full of joy, and I'm feeling heavy and sad, I'm utterly miserable. When I want to beg and persuade men to believe, and my spirit is dull and cold, I feel totally wretched. My teeth ache, and I can't take them out, because they're my own, just as my sermons are my own. Therefore, I can expect to find a good deal of effort, both in getting them and using them.

I remember the answer I received when I once said to my venerable grandfather, "Whenever I have to preach, I feel terribly sick, literally sick. I feel so sick that I might as well be crossing the English Channel." I went on to ask the dear old man whether he thought I would ever get over that feeling.

He said, "Your power will be gone if you do."

When it's not so much that you have hold of your subject, but that it has a hold on you, and you feel its grip with a terrible reality. That's the kind of sermon most likely to make others feel. If you're not impressed with it, you can't expect to impress others with it. So make sure your sermons always have something in them, something which will really impress both you and the hearers you address.

Sermons should be delivered in an impressive way. The delivery of some preachers is very bad. If that's the case with your delivery, try to improve it in all possible ways. One young man wanted to learn to sing. He was told by the teacher, "You have only one tone to your voice, and it's outside the scale." In the same way, some ministers' voices have only one tone and there's no music in it. As far as you are able, try to make even the way you speak minister to the great end you have in view. Preach as you would if you were pleading before a judge and begging for the life of a friend, or as if you were appealing to the Queen on behalf of someone very dear to you.

Use a tone in pleading with sinners like you would use if a gallows were erected in the room, and you were to be hanged on it unless you could persuade the person in authority to release you. That's the sort of earnestness you need in pleading with men as ambassadors for God. Try to make every sermon the type that even the most flippant shall see. Without a doubt, you are pleading with them in downright solemn earnest about eternal matters. Even if it amuses them to hear you, you want it to be clear that it's no laughing matter for you to speak to them.

I have often felt just like this when preaching. I know what it's like to use up all my ammunition and then ram myself into the great gospel gun and fire myself at my hearers – all my experience of God's goodness, all my consciousness of sin, and all my sense of the power of the gospel. For some people, nothing else will do except for that kind of preaching where they see you communicate not only the gospel but yourself too.

The kind of sermon likely to break the hearer's heart is the same kind which first broke the preacher's heart. The sermon which is likely to reach the heart of the hearer is the one which comes straight from the heart of the preacher. Always seek to preach, so the people shall be

impressed as well as interested and instructed.

Chapter 8

Take Out Everything Likely to Distract

Fifthly, I think preachers should try to take out everything likely to divert the hearer's mind from the object we have in view. The best style of preaching is like the best style of dress – that which nobody notices. A gentleman went to spend the evening with Hannah More. When he came home, his wife asked him, "How was Miss More dressed? She must have been dressed very splendidly."

The gentleman answered, "Really she was…. Why, dear me, how was she dressed? I didn't notice how she was dressed at all. Anyway, there was nothing particularly noticeable in her manner of dress. She was the object of interest." That's the way a true lady is dressed, so we notice her and not her garments. She is so well dressed that we don't know how she's dressed, and that's the best way of dressing a sermon. Let it never be said of you (as is the case of certain popular preachers), "He did the thing so majestically. He spoke with such lofty diction, etc., etc., etc. "

Never introduce anything into your sermon that would likely distract the attention of the hearer from the important object you have in view. If you take the sinner's mind off the main subject and speak according to the custom of men, it makes it much less likely he will receive the impact or impression you desire to convey. Consequently, the probability of his being converted is less. I remember reading what Mr. Finney said in his book Finney on Revival . He said there was a person at the point of being converted, and just then an old woman wearing wooden shoes came shuffling up the aisle making a great noise, and that soul was lost.

I know what the evangelist meant, though I don't like the way he put the matter. The noise of the old lady's shoes probably took the person's mind off the thing he should have been thinking about, and it's quite possible he couldn't be brought back to exactly the same point again. However, while we look after all these little things, as if everything depended upon us, we must remember it's the Holy Spirit alone who makes the work effectual.

Don't let your sermon distract people's attention by being only very distantly related to the text. Many hearers still believe there should be some sort of connection between the sermon and the text, and if they begin asking themselves, "How did the minister get over there? What does his talk have to do with the text?" The result is that you will have lost their attention, and that wandering from the text habit of yours may prove to be very destructive to them. Therefore, keep to your texts. If you don't, you will be like a little boy who went out fishing, and his uncle said to him, "Have you caught many fish, Samuel?"

The boy answered, "I've been fishing for three hours, uncle, and I haven't caught any fish, but I've lost a lot of worms. "

I hope you will never have to say, "I didn't win any souls for the Savior, but I spoiled a lot of precious texts," or, "I confused and confounded many passages of Scripture, but I did no good with them." Or to say, "I wasn't particularly enthusiastic to learn the mind of the Spirit as revealed in the text in order to get its meaning clear in my own mind, though it took a deal of squeezing and packing to get my mind into the text." None of these are good things to do, so stick to your texts and seek to get out of the Scriptures what the Holy Spirit has put into them.

Never let your hearers have to ask the question, "What has this sermon to do with the text?" If you do, the people won't benefit, and it may even be that they won't be saved.

Get all the education you can. Drink in everything your teachers can possibly impart to you. While in Bible college, it will take time to absorb all that is in them, but you should endeavor to learn all you can. Believe me, a lack of education can hinder the work of soul winning. That 'orrible omission of the letter "h" from places where it ought to be, that aspiration of the "h" till you exasperate it altogether…. You can't tell what harm such mistakes may cause. For instance, there was a young friend who might have been converted. She seemed greatly impressed by your discourse, however she was so disgusted by the dreadful way in which you put in "h's" where they ought not to be, or left them out from where they ought to be, that she couldn't listen to you with any pleasure. Her attention was distracted by your pronunciation errors and away from the truth. In such a case, that letter "h" has done much harm.

While it may seem a trivial thing to some, it's "the letter that kills" in the case of a great many. In the same way, all sorts of grammatical blunders can do more harm than you can imagine. Perhaps, you think I'm speaking of trifling matters hardly worthy of consideration, but I am not. These distractions can cause serious consequences, and since it's easy to learn to speak and write correct English, try your best to know it well.

Perhaps someone says, "I know so-and-so, a successful brother in the ministry, and he wasn't an educated man." That's true but, mark my words, the times are changing. One young woman said to another, "I don't see why we girls need so much education. In the past, young women didn't know much. Yet, they got married."

"Yes," said her companion, "but there were no Boarding Schools in them days, but now the young men will be educated, and it will be a poor outlook for us as ain't."

A young man might say, "Such-and-such a minister didn't use correct grammar. Yet, he did well." However, the people of his day spoke that way too, so it didn't matter so much. But now, when they've all been educated, if they come and listen to you, it will be a pity if their mind is taken off the solemn things you wish to impart to them, because they can't help noticing your deficiencies of education. Even if you're not an educated man, God may bless you. But wisdom tells us that we shouldn't let our lack of education hinder the gospel from blessing men.

You can argue that, "They must be very hypercritical to find fault like that." But, don't hypercritical people need saving just as much as other people? In my case, there isn't a hypercritical person who could truthfully say they found my preaching so jarring to his ear that it disturbed his mind to the point that he couldn't possibly receive the doctrine I tried to set before him.

Did you ever hear how it came about that Charles Dickens wouldn't believe in spiritualism? At a séance, he asked to see the spirit of Lindley Murray. The supposed spirit of Lindley Murray came in and Dickens asked, "Are you Lindley Murray?"

The reply came, " I are."

With that grammatically incorrect response, there was no hope of Dickens' conversion to spiritualism. You may laugh at the story but pay attention to the moral of it. You can easily see that, by forgetting when to use the nominative or accusative case of a noun or pronoun, or by using the wrong tense of a verb, you might distract the mind of your hearer from the point you are trying to bring before him. And it may prevent the truth from reaching his heart and conscience.

Therefore, strip your sermons as much as possible of everything likely to distract the mind of your hearers from the one goal before you. The thoughts and complete attention of the people must be concentrated on the truth we are setting before them if we are to preach as to save those who come within the sound of our voice.

Sermons Full of Christ

Sixthly, I believe sermons which are full of Christ are the most likely to be blessed to the conversion of the hearers.

Let your sermons be full of Christ, from beginning to end crammed full of the gospel. As for myself, I can't preach anything but Christ and His cross, for I know nothing else. Long ago, like the apostle Paul, I determined not to know anything else except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

People have often asked me, "What's the secret of your success?" I always answer that I have no secret other than this, that I've preached the gospel – not about the gospel, but the gospel – the full, free, glorious gospel of the living Christ who is the incarnation of the good news. Preach Jesus Christ always and everywhere, and every time you preach be sure to have much of Jesus Christ in the sermon.

You remember the story of the old minister who heard a sermon by a young man. When he was asked by the young preacher what he thought of it, he was rather slow to answer. Finally, he said, "If I must tell you, I didn't like it at all. There was no Christ in your sermon."

"No," the young man answered, "because I didn't see that Christ was in the text."

"Oh!" the old minister said, "but do you not know that from every little town and village and tiny hamlet in England there's a road leading to London? Whenever I get hold of a text, I say to myself, 'There's a road from here to Jesus Christ, and I mean to keep on His trail till I get to Him.'"

"But suppose you're preaching from a text that says nothing about Christ?" the young man asked,

"Then I will go over hedge and ditch until I get to Him."

That's what we must do. We must have Christ in all our sermons, no matter what else is in or not in them. There ought to be enough of the gospel in every sermon to save a soul. Take care that it is so when you are called to preach before Her Majesty the Queen, and if you have to preach to chairwomen or chairmen, still always take care that the real gospel is in every sermon.

I have heard of a young man who was going to preach in a certain place and asked, "What kind of church is it? What do the people believe? What is their doctrinal view?"

I'll tell you how to avoid the necessity of such questions – preach Jesus Christ to them. If that doesn't suit their doctrinal views, then preach Jesus Christ the next Sunday you go too. Do the same thing the next Sunday, and the next, and the next. Never preach anything else. Those who don't like Jesus Christ must have Him preached to them till they do like Him, because they're the very people who need Him most.

All the tradesmen in the world say they can sell their goods when there is a demand for them, but our goods create as well as supply the demand. We preach Jesus Christ to those who want Him, and we also preach Him to those who don't want Him. We keep preaching Christ until we make them feel that they do want Him and can't do without Him.

Appeal to Hearts

Seventhly, it's my firm conviction that sermons most likely to convert men are those that really appeal to their hearts, not those that are fired over their heads or aimed only at their intellects. I'm sorry to say that I know some preachers who will never do much good in the world even though they are good men. They have plenty of ability, they can speak well, and they have a good deal of accuracy, but, somehow or other, there is a very sad omission in their nature. For anyone who knows them, it's quite evident they haven't any heart. I know one or two men of this sort who are as dry as leather. If you were to hang them up on the wall, as you do a piece of seaweed, to tell what kind of weather it is to be, they would be no kind of guide because

scarcely any weather would affect them.

I also know some men who are quite the opposite. They aren't likely to win souls, because they are so flippant, frivolous, and foolish. There is nothing serious about them – nothing to show they are living in earnest. I can't find any trace of a soul in them, because they are too shallow to contain one. It couldn't live in the inch or two of water (that's all they hold). The fact is, they appear to have been made without any soul, so they can't do any good preaching the gospel. You must have souls if you are to look after your brothers' souls, count on it. Just as you must have a heart if you are to reach your brother's heart.

Here's another kind of man – one who can't weep over sinners. What good is he in the ministry? He never wept over men in his life and never agonized before God on their behalf. He never said with Jeremiah, Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (Jeremiah 9:1). I know a brother like this. In a meeting of ministers, after we confessed our shortcomings, he said that he was very much ashamed of us all. No doubt, we ought to have been more ashamed of ourselves than we were, but he told us that if we had truly meant what we said in our confessions to God, we were a disgrace to the ministry. Perhaps, we were.

He went on to say, "I'm not like that." So far as he knew, he never preached a sermon without feeling it was the best he could preach and didn't think he could do any better than he had done. He was a man of routine who studied just so many hours every day, always prayed exactly so many minutes, and always preached a certain length of time. In fact, he was the most regular man I ever knew. When I heard him talk, as he did to us, I asked myself, "What does his ministry show as the result of this perfect way of doing things?" Why didn't it bear fruit of anything at all satisfactory? I guess you could say he has great gifts of dispersion. If he goes to a full chapel, he soon empties it. Yet, I believe he's a good man in his way.

I could wish that his clock would sometimes stop or strike in the middle of the half-hour. Or I could hope something extraordinary might happen to him, because some good might come of it. But he is so regular and orderly, there is no hope of his doing anything. The fault with him is that he has no fault. You'll notice that preachers who have no faults also have no merits, so try to avoid that flat, dead level, along with everything else that makes people less likely to be converted.

Coming back to the matter of the possession of a heart, which I mentioned earlier, I asked a young girl who recently joined the church, "Have you a good heart?"

She replied, "Yes, sir. "

"Have you thought over that question?" I asked in return. "Don't you have an evil heart?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered.

I said, "How do your two answers agree?"

"I know I have a good heart, because God has given me a new heart and a right spirit. I also know I have an evil heart, for I often find it fighting against my new heart."

She was right, and I'd rather feel a minister had two hearts than none at all. If you are to win many souls, it must be heart-work, far more than head-work, with you. Amid all your studies, be sure you never let your spiritual life get dry. There's no reason it should but, with many, study has had that effect. Teachers will agree with me that there is a very drying influence about Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. That verse, "Hebrew roots, as known to most, Do flourish best on barren ground" is true.

The classics have a very drying influence, mathematics is a very drying influence, and you may get absorbed in any science till your heart is gone. But don't let that be the case with you. People should never have to say of you, "He knows much more than he did when he first came among us, but he doesn't have the degree of spirituality he used to have." Take care that is never the case. Don't be satisfied with merely polishing up your grates. Stir the fire in your

heart, and get your own soul aflame with love to Christ, or else it isn't likely you will be greatly used in the winning of the souls of others.

Pray Over Sermons

Lastly, I think sermons which have been prayed over are the most likely to convert people. I mean sermons over which much real prayer is offered, both in the preparation and the delivery, because much so-called prayer is only a practiced illusion at praying.

Some time ago, I rode with a man who professed to work wonderful cures using the acids of a certain wood. After he told me about his marvelous remedy, I asked, "What's in it to bring about such successful cures as you profess?"

"Oh!" he answered. "It's the way I prepare it more than the ingredients. That's the secret of its curative properties. I rub it as hard as I can for a long while, and I have so much vital electricity in me that I put my very life into it."

Clearly, he was only a quack. Yet, we can learn a lesson even from him, because the way to compose sermons is to work vital electricity into them, by putting your own life and the very life of God into them with earnest prayer. The difference between a sermon that has been prayed over and one that has been prepared and preached by a prayerless man is like the difference Mr. Fergusson suggested in his prayer when he referred to the high priest before and after his anointing. You must anoint your sermons, and you can't do that except by much private communion with God. May the Holy Spirit anoint every one of you, and richly bless you in winning souls, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

Chapter 9

Obstacles in Our Path as We Seek to Win Souls for Christ

When it comes to soul winning, we face so many obstacles I can't attempt to make a complete catalog of them. But the first, and one of the most difficult, is the indifference and lethargy of sinners. All people are not equally indifferent. Some people seem to have a sort of religious instinct, which influences them for good, long before they have any real love toward spiritual things.

But in some districts, especially in rural districts, indifference prevails. The same state of things exists in various parts of London. It isn't infidelity, because the people don't care enough about religion to even to oppose it. They aren't concerned about what you preach or where you preach, because they have no interest in the matter at all. They don't even think about God, and so don't care about Him or His service. They only use His name in profanity.

Often, a place with little commerce going on is bad for religious effort. Among the natives of Jamaica, whenever they didn't have much work, there was little prosperity in the churches. I could point to districts not far from here where professional jobs are down, and there you will find very little good being done. All along the valley of the Thames, you'll find places where a man might preach his heart out, but little or nothing good is accomplished in those regions, just as there is no active business life there.

Now when you meet with indifference, as may happen where you go to preach – indifference affecting your own people and even permeating your deacons – what are you to do? Your only hope of overcoming it is to be doubly earnest yourself. Keep your zeal alive, even vehement, burning, blazing, all-consuming. Stir the people up somehow. And if all your earnestness seems to be in vain, still blaze and burn. If that has no effect upon your hearers, go elsewhere as the Lord directs you. This indifference or lethargy that possesses the minds of some men is very likely to have an evil influence upon our preaching, but we must strive and struggle against it and try to wake both ourselves and our hearers up. I would far rather have a man be in earnest, intense opposition of the gospel than have him careless and indifferent. You can't do much with a man if he won't speak about religion or refuses to come hear what you have to say concerning the things of God. He might as well be a downright infidel, like a leviathan covered with scales of blasphemy, as have him be a mere earth-worm wriggling away out of reach.

Unbelief

Another very great obstacle to soul winning is unbelief. It is written of the Lord Jesus when in His own country, He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief (Matthew 13:58). This evil exists in all unregenerate hearts, but in some men it takes a very pronounced form. They think about religion, but they don't believe in the truth of God which we preach. To them, their opinion is weightier and more worthy of belief than God's inspired declarations. They won't accept anything revealed in the Scriptures. As a result, these people are very hard to influence, but I warn you not to fight them with their own weapons, But foolish and unwise

questions refuse, knowing that they do beget contentions (2 Timothy 2:23). I don't believe infidels are ever won by argument, and if they are, it is very seldom.

The argument that convinces men of the truth of the gospel is that which they gather from the holiness and earnestness of those who profess to be Christ's followers. As a rule, they barricade their minds against the assaults of reason. And if we give our pulpits over to arguing with them, we will often do more harm than good. In all probability, only a very small portion of our audience will understand what we are talking about. And while we are trying to do them good, most likely we will be teaching infidelity to others who don't know anything about such things. In fact, taking this approach may even provide the first knowledge they ever have of certain heresies. Possibly, when we refute the error and our attempt is less than perfect, many a young mind may be tinged with unbelief through listening to our attempted exposure of it.

I believe you will rout unbelief by your faith rather than by your reason. By your belief and acting upon your conviction of the truth, you will do more good than by any argument, however strong it may be.

I have a friend who generally sits to hear me every Sunday. One day he asked, "What do you think? You're my only link with better things, but you are an awful man in my estimation, because you don't have the slightest sympathy with me."

I replied, "No, I have not. Rather, I don't have the least sympathy with your unbelief. "

He said, "That makes me cling to you, because I fear I will always remain as I am. But when I see your calm faith and how God blesses you in exercising it, and know what you accomplish through the power of that faith, I say to myself, 'Jack, you are a fool.'"

"You are quite right in that conclusion," I said. "The sooner you come to my way of thinking, the better, for nobody can be a bigger fool than the man who doesn't believe in God."

One of these days I expect to see him converted. While the battle between us continues, I never answer his arguments. I said to him once, "If you believe I'm a liar, you are free to think so if you like. But I testify what I do know, and state what I have seen, tasted, handled, and felt, and you ought to believe my testimony, because I have no possible purpose to serve in deceiving you." That man would have beaten me long ago if I had fired at him with the paper pellets of reason. So, I advise you to fight unbelief with belief, falsehood with the truth, and never to cut and pare down the gospel to try to make it fit in with the irrationalities and desires of men.

Delay

A third obstacle in the way of winning souls is that fatal delay which men so often make. When everything is taken into account, I don't know whether this evil is more widespread and harmful than the indifference, lethargy, and unbelief I have mentioned.

Many a man says to us what Felix said to Paul, Go away for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee (Acts 24:25). Such an individual gets into the border country, he seems to be within a few steps of Emmanuel's land, and yet he parries our home-thrusts and puts us off by saying, "Yes, I will think the matter over, it won't be long before I decide."

There's nothing like pressing men for a speedy decision and getting them to settle this all-important question at once. Never mind if they find fault with your teaching. It is always right to preach what God says, and His word is, Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of saving health (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Carnal Security

This leads me to mention another obstacle to soul winning, which is the same thing in another form, namely, carnal security.

Many people imagine they are quite safe, but they haven't really tested the foundation on which they are building to see whether it is sound and firm. They just suppose all is well. If they aren't good Christians, they can at least say they are better than some who are Christians or who call themselves Christians. To their thinking, if anything is lacking in them, they can put on the finishing touch and make themselves fit for God's presence at any time. Holding to such thinking, they have no fear. If they do fear at all, they don't live in constant dread of the reality of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. They don't stop to realize that this will be their portion for sure unless they repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ought to thunder day and night against these people. Let us plainly proclaim to them that the unbelieving sinner is condemned already , and that he is certain to perish for eternity if he doesn't trust in Christ, He that believes on him is not condemned, but he that does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18). We ought to preach so as to make every sinner tremble in his seat. And if he won't come to the Savior, he ought to at least have a hard time of it while he chooses to stay away from Him. I'm afraid we sometimes preach easy things, too soothing and agreeable, and that we don't set the real danger before men as we should. If, in this respect, we avoid declaring the whole counsel of God, at least part of the responsibility of their ruin will lie at our door, Therefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of everyone. For I have not refrained from declaring unto you the full counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27).

Despair

Another obstacle to soul winning is despair. The pendulum swings first one way and then the other. The man who yesterday had no fear, today has no hope. Thousands who have heard the gospel still live in a kind of despair of its power which is always working upon them. Perhaps, they've been brought up among people who taught them that the work of salvation was something of God altogether apart from the sinner. So they say that, if they are to be saved, they will be saved.

This teaching contains a great truth. Yet, if it's left by itself without qualification, it is a horrible falsehood. It is fatalism, not predestination, that makes men talk as if there is nothing for them to do or nothing they can do. There is no likelihood of anyone being saved while he gives you this as his only hope. "If salvation is for me, it will come to me in due time." You can meet with people who talk like this, and when you have said all you can, they will persist as if encased in steel, with no sense of responsibility, because no hope is awakened in their spirit. If they would just hope, so they might receive mercy by asking for it and be led to cast their guilty souls on Christ. What a blessing it would be.

Let us preach full and free salvation to all who trust in Jesus, so we can, if possible, reach these people. If the carnally secure could be tempted to believe, some who are quietly despairing may also summon the courage of heart and hope, and venture to come to Christ .

Love of Sin

No doubt a great obstacle to soul winning is the love of sin.

Sin lies at the door (Genesis 4:7). Many people never get saved because of some secret lust. It may be that they are living in fornication. I remember well the case of a man who I thought would certainly come to Christ. He clearly understood the power of the gospel and seemed to be moved under the preaching of the Word, but I learned he had become entangled with a woman who was not his wife. He was still living in sin while professing to seek the Savior. When I heard that, I understood why he couldn't obtain peace. No matter what the tenderness of his heart may have felt, his relationship with this woman continued to hold him in the bondage

of sin.

Some men are guilty of dishonest transactions in business. You won't see them saved as long as they continue to act like this. If they won't give up that trickery, it is unrepentant sin and they can't be saved.

Others drink to excess. People who drink to excess are often easily affected under our preaching. Their eyes water, their drinking causes them to lack wisdom, and there is an overemotional kind of sensitiveness in them. As long as a man clings to "the cup of devils" he won't be likely to come to Christ.

With others, the great difficulty is some secret sin, some hidden lust. One says he can't help flying into a rage. Another declares he can't give up getting drunk. Yet another laments he can't find peace, while the root of the problem is that a harlot stands in his way. In all these cases, we have only to keep on preaching the truth. God will help us to aim the arrow at the joint in the sinner's armor.

Self-Righteousness

Another obstacle put in our way is men's self-righteousness. They haven't committed any of these sins I've mentioned, and they've kept all the commandments from their youth up, but what do they still lack? There is no room for Christ in a full heart. When a man is clothed from head to foot with his own righteousness, he has no need of the righteousness of Christ. At least, he isn't conscious of his need. If the gospel doesn't convince him of it, Moses must come with the Law and show him his true sinful state. That's the real difficulty in many cases. The man doesn't come to Christ, because he isn't conscious that he is lost. He doesn't ask to be lifted up, because he doesn't know he is a fallen creature. He doesn't feel he has any need of divine mercy or forgiveness, so he does not seek it.

Total Worldliness

With some people, all we say has no effect because of their total worldliness. This worldliness takes two shapes. In the poor, it is the result of grinding poverty. When preaching to a man who has scarcely enough bread to eat, hardly any clothes to put on, an over-worked wife, and a home filled with the cries of his little children, we must preach wonderfully if we are to secure his attention and make him think about the world to come. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And with what shall we be clothed?" are questions that press heavily upon the poor.

To a hungry man, Christ is very lovely when He has a loaf of bread in His hand. Our Lord appeared in this way when He broke the bread and fish for the multitude. He didn't overlook feeding the hungry. When we can relieve needs of the destitute, we may be doing a necessary thing and putting them in a place where they can be capable of listening and benefiting from the gospel of Christ.

The other kind of worldliness comes of having too much of this world, or at least of making too much of this world. The gentleman must be fashionable, his daughters must be dressed in the best styles, his sons must learn to dance, and so on. This sort of worldliness has been the great curse of our nonconformist churches.

Another kind of man grinds away at the shop from morning to night. His business hardly puts up the shutters, before he takes them down again. He rises early, stays up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, so as to make money. What can we do for these covetous people whose one aim is to be rich, who scrape up the halfpennies and farthings? How can we ever hope to touch their hearts?

Managing the expenditure of money is good, but when it develops into an excessive tightness with money allied to covetousness, it becomes the habit of these miserly folk. Some will even go to chapel not only because it's the proper and respectable thing, but because they

hope to gain customers by going.

Judas remained unconverted even in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we still have people among us in whose ears the thirty pieces of silver chink so loudly that the sound of the gospel can't be heard.

Habits, Choices, and Company

One more obstacle to soul winning I want to mention is some people's habits, choices, and company. How can we expect a working-man to go home and sit all evening in the one room he has to live and sleep in? Perhaps, it's a home with two or three children crying, linen drying, and all sorts of things to produce a restless uneasiness. The man walks in and finds his wife scolding, his children crying, and the linen drying. What would you do in his place? Suppose you weren't a Christian man, wouldn't you go somewhere else? You can't just walk the streets, and you know there's a cozy room at the public boarding house with its flashing gaslight, or plenty of jolly companions at the gin-palace at the corner where everything is bright and cheerful.

You can't hope to be the means of saving men while they go to such places, and while they meet with the company found there. All the good they receive from the hymns they heard on Sunday is driven away as they listen to the entertaining songs in the tavern. And all memories of Sunday services are obliterated by very questionable tales told in the bar. Consequently, it's a great blessing to have a place where working men can come and sit in safety from such influences, a gathering that's not all singing, all preaching, or all praying, but some of all these things.

Here the man is empowered to break the former habits which seemed to hold him fast. Before long, he doesn't go home to a single room but has two rooms, or perhaps a little cottage, so his wife can dry the linen in the backyard. Now he finds the baby doesn't cry so much as he used to, probably because his mother has more to give him, and everything gets better and brighter now that the man has forsaken his former meeting places.

A Christian minister is quite justified in using every right and lawful means to wean people from their evil associations. At times, this may require going beyond the usual methods if it means we can win men to the Lord Jesus Christ. That must be our one aim in all we do. No matter what obstacles enter our path, we must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, so they can be removed, souls saved, and God glorified.

Chapter 1 0

How to Encourage Our People to Win Souls

I've tried to show you various ways in which we win souls, the qualifications towards God and towards man of those likely to be used in winning souls, the kind of sermons most likely to win souls, and the obstacles soul winners face. Now, I would like to address another part of the subject, that is how we can induce our people to become soul winners .

Whether you aspire to become the pastor of a church, or the Lord calls you to be an evangelist or missionary to the people unacquainted with the true God, you begin as a single sower of the good seed of the kingdom. You go forth scattering handfuls from your own basket. However, your desire should be to become a spiritual farmer with well-defined acreage that you won't sow entirely yourself, because you have others to aid you in the work. To one you will say, "Go," and he will go, or, "Come," and he will come at once. In your effort to reach others, you will seek to lead them into the mystery and skill of seed sowing, so that after a while, you'll be surrounded by large numbers of people doing this good work. In this way, a far greater acreage (outreach) may be brought into cultivation for the Cultivator.

Some of us, by God's grace, have been richly blessed to have a large number of people spiritually aroused under our ministry. These are people instructed and strengthened by us, and who are now involved in doing good in service for God.

Work of Time

Let me warn you not to look for all this at the beginning of ministry, for it is the work of time. Don't expect this kind of result in the first year of your pastorate. It is the reward of twenty years of continuous toil in one place. Young men sometimes make a great mistake in the way they talk to people who never met them until about six weeks ago. What they don't realize is that they can't speak with the same authority as one who has been like a father among his people, who has been with them for twenty or thirty years. If they do, it becomes a sort of foolish facade on their part. It is equally as foolish to expect the people to instantly act the same as they would after being trained by a godly minister for a quarter of a century.

It is true that you can go to a church where somebody else faithfully labored for many years, who sowed the good seed for a long period, and as a result find your own blessed and prosperous circle of workers. If you can jump into a good man's shoes and follow the path he walked, you'll be fortunate. It's always a good sign when the horses don't know they have a new driver. As an inexperienced pastor, you will be a very blessed man if that is your fortune. But the probability is more likely that you will go to a place that's been run almost to ruin or been altogether neglected.

Perhaps, you will try to get the principal deacon to imitate your earnestness. Your fervor burns as a white heat, and when you find him cold as steel, you become like a piece of hot iron dipped into a pail of water. He may tell you that he remembers others who were hot like you when they started out and go on to tell you how they quickly cooled and lost their fervor. He may even say he won't be surprised if you do the same. He's a very good man, but he is old and you

are young. We can't put young heads on old shoulders, even if we were to attempt to do it.

Perhaps, next you'll try some of the young people, thinking you might possibly fare better with them. However, they don't understand you and are reluctant and withdrawn. Don't be surprised if they quickly head off in another unrelated direction. It is very likely you will be the one doing almost everything in connection with the work. Expect it to unfold in this manner and you won't be disappointed if it turns out to be so. It may turn out otherwise, but you'll be wise to go into the ministry expecting very little assistance from the people in the work of soul winning.

Anticipate you will have to do it yourself and do it alone. Begin doing it alone, sow the seed, travel up and down the field, and always look to the Lord of the harvest to bless your labor. Under that divine blessing – rather than a partly trodden down plot of land full of nettles, stones, weeds, or thorns – you can look forward to the time when, through your efforts, you will see a well-tilled farm in which you can sow seed to the greatest gain, along with a small army of fellow laborers to aid you in the service.

I must remind you not to expect all this for at least some months after you settle down to work. Revivals, if genuine, don't always come the moment we whistle for them. Try to whistle for the wind and see if it will come. God granted the great rain in answer to Elijah's prayers but not the first time he prayed. We must pray again, and again, and again, and at last the cloud will appear and, with it, showers out of the cloud. Wait a while, work on, plod on, plead on, and in due time the blessing will be given, And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not (Galatians 6:9). And you will find you have the church you envision. But it won't come to you all at once.

I don't think Mr. John Angell James, of Birmingham, saw much fruit to his ministry for many years. As far as I remember, Carr's Lane Chapel wasn't a place of great notoriety before he preached there, but he kept steadily preaching the gospel. Over time, he drew a company of godly people around him who helped make him the greatest power for good that Birmingham had at that time. Try to do the same, but don't expect to see right away what he and other faithful ministers have only been able to accomplish in many years.

No Set Rule

In order to accomplish the goal of gathering a band of Christians who will be soul winners around you, I recommend you don't go to work according to any set rule. What would be right at one time might not be wise at another, and what is be best for one place won't be so good elsewhere. Sometimes, the best plan would be to call the members of the church together, tell them what you would like to see, and plead strongly with them that each of them should become a soul winner for God.

Say to them, "I don't want to be your pastor simply so I can preach to you. I long to see souls saved and to see those who are saved seeking to win others for the Lord Jesus Christ. You know how the Pentecostal blessing was given when the whole church met with one accord in one place and continued in prayer and supplication. The Holy Spirit was poured out and thousands were converted. Can't we get together in similar manner and cry mightily to God for a blessing?"

Such an encouraging challenge might succeed in arousing them. Call them together and sincerely plead with them. Ask God's blessing and point out specifically what you wish them to do. It may be like setting fire to dry fuel. On the other hand, if they lack sympathy in the work of soul saving, nothing may come of it. They may say something like, "It was a very nice meeting, and our pastor sure expects a good deal of us. We hope he can get it." So far as they are concerned that's where it will end.

Begin with One or Two

If stirring the whole church into action should not succeed, God may lead you to begin with one or two. Usually, you can find some "choice young man" in each congregation. When you notice deeper spirituality in one than in the rest of the members, you might say to him, "Will you come to my house on such-and-such an evening so we can pray a little together?" Gradually increase the number to two or three godly young men if possible. Or, begin with some gracious older woman – who perhaps lives nearer to God than any of the men – whose prayers would help more than theirs.

Once you have reached an agreement of the importance of soul winning, you might say to them, "Now if we can't influence the whole church, we will begin with our small group before we go to outsiders. Let's try and be ourselves always at the prayer meetings to set an example to the rest of the church, and let's also arrange to have gatherings for prayer in our own houses. We shall seek to get our brothers and sisters to join us. You, good sister, can get a half-dozen sisters together in your house for a little meeting, and you, brother, can say to a few friends, 'Couldn't we meet together to pray for our pastor?" '

Sometimes, the most effectual way to burn a house is by pouring petroleum down the middle of it and setting fire to it, as the ladies and gentlemen did in Paris in the days of the Commune. Sometimes, the quickest method is to light it at the four corners. I've never tried either plan, but that's what I think. I like to set fire to churches rather than houses, because they don't burn down. They burn up and keep on burning when the fire is the right sort. When a bush is nothing but a bush, it is soon consumed when it is set on fire. But when it's a bush that burns on and is not consumed, we can know God is there (Exodus 3:2).

It's the same with a church flaming with holy zeal. Your work is to set your church on fire somehow. You may do it by speaking to the whole membership, or you may do it by speaking to a few choice spirits, but you must do it somehow. Have a secret society for this sacred purpose. Turn yourselves into a band of celestial revolutionaries whose aim is to set the whole church on fire. If you do, the Devil won't like it. You'll cause him such uneasiness that he will seek the total breakup of the coalition, and that's just what we want. We don't desire anything but a bitter and deadly struggle between the church and the world, along with all its habits and customs. But again, I say, all this will take time. I've seen some people run so fast at the beginning of the work that they become like broken, winded horses, and it is truly a pitiable sight. So, take time and don't look for everything you desire to be available right away.

Persist in Prayer

In most places, a prayer meeting is held once a week. If you want your people, as well as yourself, to be soul winners, try to keep prayer meetings going all you can. Don't be like certain ministers in the suburbs of London who say they can't get the people out to a prayer meeting and a teaching too. So they have one weeknight meeting for prayer, at which they give a short talk.

The other day, one lazy minister said that the weeknight address was almost as bad as delivering a sermon, so he combined a prayer meeting and teaching into one. But now, it's neither a prayer meeting nor a lesson. It is neither fish, meat, poultry, nor even good red herring. Soon, he will say the prayer meeting is no good and give it up, and I am sure the people will agree with him. After that, why shouldn't he give up one of the Sunday services? The same reasoning might apply to that as to the weeknight meeting.

I saw, in an American paper today, the following paragraph:

"The well-known fact is again going around that, in Mr. Spurgeon's church in London, the regulars are absent one Sunday evening every three months, and the house is given up to strangers. English 'boasting is excluded' in this matter. Our American Christianity is of so noble a type that hosts of our people give up their pews to strangers every Sunday night in the year."

I hope this won't be the case with your people, either with respect to the Sunday services or the prayer meetings. If I were you, I would make prayer meetings a special feature of my ministry. Let it be a prayer meeting unlike any other within seven thousand miles. Don't walk into the prayer meeting, as so many do, to say whatever comes to mind at the moment. Instead, do your best to prepare and make the meeting interesting to all who are there. And don't hesitate to tell good Mr. Snooks that, with God's help, he shall not pray for twenty-five minutes. Earnestly entreat him to cut it short, and if he doesn't, then stop him.

If a man came into my house intending to cut my wife's throat, first I would reason with him regarding the wrong of it, and then I would effectually prevent him from doing her any harm. I love the church almost as much as I love my dear wife. So, if a man wants to pray long, he can pray long somewhere else but not at the meeting over which I'm presiding. If he can't pray publicly for a reasonable length of time, tell him to finish it up at home. If the people seem dull and depressed, get them to sing Moody and Sankey hymns. When they can sing them all by heart, don't sing any more "Moody and Sankey" for a time but go back to your own hymn book.

It's up to you to make it work. If you find your people can't come in the evening, try to hold a prayer meeting when they can come. You might get a good meeting in the country at half-past four in the morning. Why not? You would get more people at five o'clock in the morning than you would at five o'clock at the other end of the day. I believe a prayer meeting at six o'clock in the morning among agricultural people would attract many. They would drop in for a few words of prayer and be glad for the opportunity. Or you might have it at twelve o'clock at night. Try it, and you may find people who couldn't come at any other time. Try one o'clock, or two o'clock, or three o'clock, or any hour of the day or night to get the people out to pray one way or another.

If they can't be encouraged to come to the meetings, go to their house and say, "I'm going to have a prayer meeting in your family room."

They may say, "Oh, dear! My wife will be distressed."

Say, "Oh, no! Tell her not to trouble herself, for we can go into the garage, your backyard, or anywhere, but we must have a prayer meeting here."

If they won't come to the prayer meeting, we must go to them. Imagine fifty of us trudging down the street and holding an open-air meeting. There could be many things worse than that. Remember how the women fought those selling liquor in America? They prayed them out of the trade.

If we can't stir the people without doing extraordinary things in the name of all that is good and great, let's do extraordinary things. Somehow we must carry on with prayer meetings, for they are the very secret source of power with God and with men.

Be an Earnest Example

We must always be an earnest example ourselves. A minister who is slow to move won't have a lively zealous church. A man who is indifferent or who does his work with as little effort as possible, shouldn't expect to have people around him who are serious about the salvation of souls. If you are reading this book, it's clear you desire to have Christians around you who long for the salvation of their friends and neighbors, people who expect God will bless the preaching of your sermons. Such people will watch the countenances of those listening to your teaching to see if your message hits the mark. And they will be truly distressed if no conversions take place and souls are not saved. Perhaps, they wouldn't complain to you if that were the case, but they would cry to God on your behalf.

They might even speak to you about the matter. For instance, one Sunday evening when we only had fourteen to receive into the church, one of my deacons talked to me as we were going to the fellowship. He said, "Governor, this won't do." We had been accustomed to have forty or fifty every month, and the good man wasn't satisfied with a smaller number. I agreed with him

that we must have more than that in the future, if possible. Some might feel annoyed to have anything like that said to them, but it delighted me because it was exactly how I felt myself .

Desire Christians Willing to Do All They Can

Next, we want Christians around us who are willing to do all they can to help in the work of winning souls. A number of people can't be reached by the pastor. Try to get Christian workers to join you who will "button-hole" people. You know what I mean. It's pretty close work when you hold a friend by a lock of his hair or by his coat button.

Absalom didn't find it easy to get away when caught in the oak by the hair of his head (2 Samuel 18:9). Try to get uncomfortably close with sinners. Talk gently to them until you've whispered them into the kingdom of heaven, until you've told them the blessed story that will bring peace and joy to their heart. In the church of Christ, we want a group of well-trained sharpshooters who will pick people out individually and always be on the lookout for all who come in, not to annoy them, but to make sure they don't go away without receiving a personal warning, a personal invitation, and a personal appeal to come to Christ.

We desire to train all our people for this service, to make salvation armies out of them. Every man, woman, or child in our churches should be ready to work for the Lord. Then they won't relish the fine sermons Americans seem to delight in so much, but they will say, "Pooh! Flummery! We don't want that kind of thing." What do people at work in the harvest field want with thunder and lightning? They just want to rest a while under a tree, to wipe the sweat from their foreheads, to refresh themselves after their toil, and then to get to work again. Our preaching ought to be like the address of a commander-in-chief to his army, "There is the enemy. Don't let me know where they are tomorrow." What our people need is something short, something sweet, something that stirs and excites them.

Chapter 1 1

Favorable Soul Winning Atmosphere

We are sure to get the blessing we seek when the whole atmosphere in which we live is favorable to soul winning. One evening, a friend said to me, "I expect a sure blessing tonight, with such a lot of dew about." I pray you know often what it's like to preach where there is plenty of dew. To understand what I mean by this, I must explain about the Irishman who said it was no use to irrigate while the sun was shining, for he noticed that whenever it rained, clouds hid the sun. That observation made a great deal of practical sense, more than one might realize at first, as is usually the case in Hibernian statements.

The shower benefits the plants, because everything is suitable for the rain to come down, the shaded sky, the humidity of the atmosphere, the general damp feeling of everything all around. But, if you were to pour the same quantity of water down while the sun shined brightly, the leaves would probably turn yellow and, in the heat, shrivel and die. Any gardener would tell you that he is always careful to water the flowers in the evening when the sun is off them. This is the reason why irrigation, however well it's done, is not as beneficial as the rain.

A favorable influence in the whole atmosphere is necessary if plants and flowers are to derive benefit from the watering. It is exactly the same in spiritual things. I have often noticed that when God blesses my ministry to an unusual extent the people, in general, are in a praying mood. It's a grand thing to preach in an atmosphere full of the dew of the Spirit. I know what it is to preach with it, and, sadly, I know what it is to preach without it, like Gilboa when there was no dew nor rain. You can preach and hope God will bless your message, but it is no use. I hope that won't be the case with you. There's a chance your lot will be cast where some dear brother has long been toiling, praying, and laboring for the Lord. You will step into his shoes and find all the people perfectly ready for the blessing.

When I go out to preach, I often feel no credit is due to me, because everything is in my favor. The good folk sit there, with their mouths open waiting for the blessing. Almost everybody expects me to say something good. Because they are looking for it, it does them good. And when I'm gone, they keep praying for the blessing, and they get it.

When a man is put on a horse that runs away with him, he must ride. That's exactly how it has frequently been with me. The blessing has been given, because the surroundings were favorable. You can often trace the successful results to the preacher's sermon and all the circumstances connected with its delivery. That's how it was with Peter's sermon that brought three thousand souls to Christ on the day of Pentecost. Never was a better sermon preached. It was a clear personal message likely to convince people of the sin of their treatment of the Savior in putting Him to death. But I don't attribute the conversions solely to the apostle's words, because there were clouds about. The whole atmosphere was "damp" with "plenty of dew about." The disciples had long continued in prayer and supplication for the descent of the Spirit, and didn't the Holy Spirit descend upon every one of them as well as upon Peter? In the fullness of time, the Pentecostal blessing was poured out abundantly. When a church gets into the same state as the apostles and disciples at that memorable period, heavenly electricity is concentrated at that particular spot. Yet, remember that even Christ Himself couldn't do many

mighty works in some places because of the people's unbelief. I'm sure all His servants who are thoroughly engaged are, at times, hampered in the same way. I fear some reading this book have worldly, Christ-less people to work with, but I'm not sure that means you ought to run away from them. Instead, if possible, stop and try to make them more Christlike.

It's true that I've had the other sort of experience, as well as the joyous one I've described. One night, I preached in a place where they hadn't had a minister for some time. When I reached the chapel, I received no kind of welcome. Those in charge were to receive monetary benefit, if nothing else, from my visit, but they didn't welcome me at all. In fact, they said that while a majority at the church were in favor of inviting me, the deacons didn't approve of it, because they didn't think I was "sound." Some brothers and sisters from other churches, who attended, seemed pleased and profited. But the people who belonged to the church where I spoke didn't receive a blessing. They hadn't expected one, so, of course, they didn't receive it.

When the service was over, I went into the vestry and found the two deacons standing there, one on each side of the mantelpiece.

I asked, "Are you the deacons? "

"Yes."

"The church isn't prospering, is it?"

"No," they admitted.

I honestly said, "I wouldn't think so with such deacons."

"Do you have something against us?" they asked.

"No, but I don't know anything in your favor."

Why did I do this? I thought that since I couldn't get to them in the gathering, I would try to do what I could with one or two. I was glad to know that afterwards, my sermon and remarks led to an improvement. Since then, they have a brother there who's doing well as pastor. However, one of the deacons was so irritated by what I said that he left that church. The other deacon, while irritated at the time, stayed and labored and prayed until better days came. It's hard when you're rowing against wind and tide, but it's even worse than that if you have a horse on the bank, pulling a rope, and dragging your boat the other way. But if that's your case, work all the harder and pull the horse into the water.

Work hard and remember that once a favorable atmosphere is created, the difficulty is to maintain it. Notice that I said, "When the atmosphere is created ." I chose that expression to remind us how little we can do, or, rather, that we can do nothing without God, I AM the vine, ye are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing (John 15:5). It is He who controls atmospheres. He alone can create them and maintain them. Therefore, our eyes must be continually lifted up to Him, from whom comes all our help.

It may happen that some of you reading this book preach sermons earnestly and well − sermons likely to be blessed - but you don't see sinners saved. If that's the case, don't stop preaching, but say to yourself, "I must try to gather a number of people around me who will pray with me and for me. People who will talk to their friends about the things of God, and who will live and labor so the Lord will bless with a shower of grace, because those are the surroundings suitable to help the blessing come. I have heard ministers say that, when they have preached in the Tabernacle, something in the congregation has had a wonderfully powerful effect upon them. I think, because we have good prayer meetings, there is an earnest spirit of prayer among the people. Along with that, many of them are on the watch for souls. One brother in particular always watches for any hearers who have been convicted. I call him my hunting dog, because he's always ready to pick up the birds I've shot and bring them to me. I have known him to approach them one after another, so he might bring them to Jesus. I rejoice that I have other friends like this too.

When our brothers, Fullerton and Smith, conducted some special services for a very well-known preacher who is in the habit of using rather long words, he said the evangelists had the faculty for "the precipitation of decision." He meant that the Lord blessed them in bringing men to decision for Christ. It's a grand thing when a man has the faculty for the precipitation of decision. But it's an equally grand thing when he has a number of people around him who say to each one listening to the message, after every service, "Well, friend, did you enjoy that sermon? Was there something in it for you? Are you saved? Do you know the way of salvation?" Always have your own Bible ready and turn to the passages you want to quote with each of these questions.

That friend of mine I just mentioned always seemed to open his Bible to the most appropriate passages. He appeared to have them all ready, and handy, so he would be sure to hit on the right texts. You know the sort of texts I mean, those a seeking soul wants :

> For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).
>
> He that believes in the Son has eternal life (John 3:36).
>
> The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).
>
> He that comes to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).
>
> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13).

This brother has a number of such passages printed in bold type and fastened inside his Bible, so he can refer to the right one in a moment. In this way, he has led many troubled souls to the Savior. He has found this an exceedingly helpful tool, and you will be wise to adopt a similar method.

Lastly, don't be afraid when you go to a church and find it in a very poor condition. It's a fine thing for a young man to begin with a downright bad prospect, because with the right kind of work, they will have to see some kind of improvement. If the chapel is all but empty when you first go to it, it can't get much worse than that. The probability is that you will be the instrument that brings some into the church thus making matters better. If there is any place where I would choose to labor to win souls, it would be just on the borders of the infernal lake. Because I really believe it would bring more glory to God to work among those who are considered the worst of sinners.

If your ministry is blessed to reach such people as these, they will be likely to cling to you through your whole life. On the other hand, the very worst sort of people are those who have long been professing Christians but are destitute of grace and are Christians in name only, because they are still dead. Sadly, people like that are among our deacons and church members, and we can't get them out. As long as they remain within our body, they exert a most destructive poisonous influence. It's dreadful to have dead members where every single part of the body should be moved with divine life. Yet, in many cases that's how it is, and we are powerless to cure the evil.

We must let the tares grow until the harvest. But the best thing to do, when you can't uproot the tares, is to water the wheat. Nothing keeps back tares like good strong wheat. I've known ungodly men who have had the place made so hot for them that they've been glad to clear right out of the church. They said, "The preaching is too strong for us, and these people are too puritanical and strict to suit us." What a blessing it is when that's the case. We didn't wish to drive them away by preaching the truth. But since they went of their own accord, we certainly don't want them back as members. We will leave them where they are, praying that the Lord in the greatness of His grace will turn them from the error of their ways and bring them to Himself. Then we shall be glad to have them back with us to live and labor for the Lord

Chapter 1 2

How to Raise the Dead

As manual laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, let me call your attention to a most instructive miracle wrought by the prophet Elisha, as recorded in the fourth chapter of 2 Kings. Here we read about how God rewarded the hospitality of the Shunammite woman with the gift of a son. Sadly, the duration of all earthly mercies are uncertain. And after the child grew a little older, he fell sick and died.

The distressed, but believing, mother hurried immediately to the man of God, Elisha, because it was through him God had spoken the promise of a child to fulfilled her heart's desire. She decided to plead her case with him, so he might bring it before his Divine Master and obtain an answer of peace for her. Elisha's action is recorded in 2 Kings 4:29-37.

> Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins and take my staff in thy hand and go; if thou meet anyone, salute him not; and if anyone salutes thee, answer him not again, and lay my staff upon the face of the child. Then the mother of the child said, As the LORD lives and as thy soul lives, I will not leave thee. And he arose and followed her. And Gehazi had gone on before them and had laid the staff upon the face of the child, but there was neither voice, nor attention. Therefore he went again to meet him and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was laid dead upon his bed. He went in therefore and shut the door upon both of them and prayed unto the LORD. Then he went up and lay upon the child and put his mouth upon his mouth and his eyes upon his eyes and his hands upon his hands; thus he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned and walked through the house to and fro and went up and stretched himself upon him again; and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And as she was coming in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she entered in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground and took up her son and went out.

The position of Elisha in this case is exactly your position in relation to your work for Christ. Elisha had to deal with a dead child. It's true that, in his instance, it was natural death. While in your situation, the death you come into contact with, while no less real, is spiritual. The boys and girls in your Sunday school classes are, as surely as grown-up people, dead in sins (Ephesians 2:5).

I pray none of you reading this book will fail to fully realize the state in which all human beings are naturally found. Unless you have a very clear sense of the complete ruin and spiritual death of your children, you won't be capable of becoming a blessing to them. I pray you go to them, not treating them as someone sleeping who you can awaken by your own power, but as to spiritual corpses who can only be made alive by a divine power. Elisha's great objective wasn't to cleanse the dead body, to embalm it with spices, wrap it in fine linen, or place it in an appropriate position, only to leave it still a corpse. He aimed at nothing less than

the restoration of the child to life.

May those teachers reading this never be content with aiming at or even with realizing secondary benefits. Instead, strive for the most outstanding of all conclusions – the salvation of immortal souls. Your concern isn't merely to teach the children in your classes to read the Bible, nor to simply instill the obligations of morality, nor even to instruct them in just the letter of the gospel. Your high calling is to be an instrument in the hands of God, for bringing life from heaven to dead souls. If your children remain dead in sin, your teaching on the Lord's Day will have been a failure.

In the case of the secular teacher, a child's reasonable proficiency in knowledge of a subject proves the instructor's efforts were not wasted. But in your case, even if your youthful charges grow up to be respectable members of society, and even if they become a regular part of the way of grace, you won't feel your petitions to heaven have been answered or your desires granted, nor your highest intentions reached, unless something more is done. Unless, in fact, it can be said, he has made us alive together with the Christ (Ephesians 2:5).

Our Mission: To Raise the Dead

Our aim is resurrection. Our mission is to raise the dead. We are like Peter at Joppa or Paul at Troas. We have a young Dorcas or Eutychus to bring to life. How is such an exceptional work to be achieved? If we succumb to unbelief, the work the Lord has called us to will be staggering, because of the fact that it is quite beyond our own power. We can't raise the dead. If asked to do so, we might, like the king of Israel, tear our clothes and say, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive?" The fact is, we are no more powerless than Elisha, because he couldn't restore the Shunammite's son in his own power either.

While it's true that we can't cause the dead hearts of those we teach to palpitate with spiritual life by our own efforts, it's also true that Paul and Apollos were equally as powerless. Does this fact discourage us? No. Instead, it directs us to our true power by prohibiting us from depending on our own imagined power. I trust you are already aware that the man who lives in the faith zone dwells in the realm of miracles. Faith trades in marvels, and her merchandise is filled with wonders.

> "Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
> And looks to that alone;
> Laughs at impossibilities,
> And cries, 'It shall be done.'"
> ~ Fanny Wedgwood

No Common Man

Elisha was no common man now that God's Spirit was upon him, calling him to God's work and aiding him in it. And you, as a devoted, anxious, prayerful teacher, no longer remain an ordinary person. In a supernatural way, you have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. God dwells in you. By faith, you have entered upon the career of a wonder-worker. You are sent into the world, not to do the things possible to man but those impossibilities which God works by His Spirit, by the means of His believing people. You are to work miracles − to do marvels .

Don't look at the renewal of these dead children, which in God's name you are called to bring about, as being a thing unlikely or difficult. Remember who it is that works through your feeble service as an instrument. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? (Acts 26:8). Unbelief will whisper to you, as you note the wicked shamelessness and early obstinacy of your children, "Can these dry bones live?" But your

answer must be, “O Lord, You know!”

As you commit all cases to the almighty hand, it is your part to prophesy to the dry bones and to the heavenly wind. Before long, you will see, in the valley of your vision, the signal which indicates triumph of life over death. At this moment, let’s take up our true position and fulfill it. We have dead children before us, and our souls yearn to bring them to life. We confess that all spurring of the heart must be performed by the Lord alone. Our humble petition should be that if the Lord will use us in connection with His miracles of grace, He would now show us what He would have us to do.

Elisha Should Have Remembered

It would have been best if Elisha had remembered he was once the servant of Elijah and had studied his master’s example so as to imitate it. It would have been wise if Elisha had imitated the example of the master, whose mantle he wore, at the outset. If he had, he wouldn’t have sent Gehazi with a staff but would have done immediately what he was compelled to do in the end. We find this example in 1 Kings 17 with the account of Elijah’s raising a dead child. Elijah, the master, had left a complete example for his servant. It wasn’t until Elisha followed his example in all respects that the miraculous power was manifested.

My fellow servants, I say to you with far more force that it is best for us as teachers to imitate our Master. We must study the modes and methods of our glorified Master and learn the art of winning souls at His feet. Just as He, in deepest sympathy, came into the closest possible contact with our wretched humanity and humiliated Himself to stoop to our sorrowful condition, so must we come near to the souls we have to deal with. Yearn over them with His yearning, and weep over them with His tears. If we want to see them raised from the state of sin, the only way we will become wise to win souls is by imitating the spirit and manner of the Lord Jesus.

Elisha forgot this, however, and gladly decided to plan out a course of action, which would more clearly display his own prophetic dignity. He placed his staff into his servant Gehazi’s hand and told him to go lay it upon the child, as if the divine power upon him was so abundant that it would work in any circumstance, even if his personal presence and efforts were dispensed with. The Lord’s thoughts were not in agreement with this assumption.

I’m afraid that very often the truth we deliver from the pulpit − and doubtless it is much the same in your classes − is a thing which is extraneous and not of ourselves, like a staff which we hold in our hand, but which is not a part of ourselves. We take doctrinal or practical truth as Gehazi took the staff and lay it upon the face of the child, but we ourselves don’t agonize for its soul.

We try this doctrine and that truth, this anecdote and another illustration, this way of teaching a lesson and that manner of delivering an address, but so long as the truth we deliver is a matter apart from ourselves and unconnected with our innermost being, it will have no more effect upon a dead soul than Elisha’s staff had upon the dead child. Sadly, I fear I have frequently preached the gospel, sure that it was my Master’s gospel and the true prophetic staff, yet it has had no result. Because, I’m afraid to say, I hadn’t preached it with the vehemence, earnestness, and zeal which ought to accompany it. Can’t you make the same admission? That sometimes you’ve taught the truth − it was the truth, you’re certain of that − the very truth which you found in the Bible, and which has at times been precious to your own soul. Yet, no good resulted from it, because while you taught the truth you did not feel the truth, nor feel for the child to whom the truth was addressed. You were just like Gehazi placing the prophetic staff upon the face of the child with an indifferent hand. It’s no wonder you had to say with Gehazi, “The child is not awaked,” for the true awakening power found no appropriate medium in your lifeless teaching.

We aren’t sure Gehazi was convinced that the child was really dead. He spoke as if the boy

was only asleep and needed waking. God will not bless teachers who don't grasp in their hearts the really fallen state of their children. If you think the child isn't really depraved, if you indulge foolish notions about the innocence of childhood and the dignity of human nature, it shouldn't surprise you if you remain barren and unfruitful.

How can God bless you to work a resurrection when, if He did work it by you, you are incapable of perceiving its glorious nature? If the lad awoke, it wouldn't have surprised Gehazi. He would have thought the boy was only startled from an unusually sound sleep. If God were to bless such efforts to the conversion of souls, the testimony of those who don't believe in the total depravity of man would merely be, "The gospel is very moralizing and exerts a most beneficial influence." The problem is that they would never exalt and magnify the regenerating grace by which He who sits on the throne makes all things new, And he that was seated upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new (Revelation 21:5a) .

We Must Not Give Up

Observe carefully what Elisha did when thwarted in his first effort. When we fail at one attempt, we must not give up our work. If you've been unsuccessful until now, you must not conclude that you aren't called to the work, any more than Elisha might have reasoned that the child couldn't be restored. The lesson of your non-success is not to cease the work but to change the method. It isn't the person who is out of place, it's the plan which is defective. If you haven't been able to accomplish what you wished, remember the schoolboy's song, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again."

However, don't continue to try to accomplish things in the same way unless you're sure it's the best one. If your first method is unsuccessful, improve upon it. Examine where you have failed. Then, by changing your method or your spirit, the Lord can prepare you for a degree of usefulness far beyond your expectation. Elisha, instead of being discouraged when he learned the child did not awaken, girded up his loins and raced with greater vigor to the work before him.

Notice where the dead child was placed. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was laid dead upon his bed (2 Kings 4:32). This was the bed provided for Elisha through the hospitality of the Shunammite woman − the famous bed which, with the table, the stool, and the candlestick, will never be forgotten in the church of God. That famous bed had to be used for a purpose the good woman would never have thought of when, out of love to the prophet's God, she prepared it for the prophet's rest.

I like to think of the dead child lying on that bed as a symbol of the place where our unconverted children must be situated if we want them saved. If we are to be a blessing to them, they must lie in our hearts. They must be our daily and nightly charge. We must take the state of our children with us to our silent place of repose. We must think of them in the watches of the night, and when we can't sleep because we care. They must share in those midnight anxieties. Our beds must witness our cries. "Oh, that the boys and girls in my class might become children of the living God!" Elijah and Elisha both teach us that we must not place the child far from us, out of doors, or down below us in a vault of cold forgetfulness. If we are to have the child raised to life, we must care about him with the warmest sympathies of our hearts.

Pray

In reading on, we find, He went in therefore and shut the door upon both of them and prayed unto the LORD (2 Kings 4:33) . At this point, the prophet is properly engaged in his work, and we have a fine opportunity to learn the secret of raising children from the dead from him. If you turn to the narrative of Elijah, you'll find that Elisha adopted the established method of proceeding, as he copied the method of his master Elijah. And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom and carried him up into the chamber where he abode

and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD and said, O LORD my God, hast thou even brought evil upon the widow, with whom I sojourn, by killing her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried unto the LORD and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived (1 Kings 17:19-22).

The great secret lies, in a large measure, in powerful supplication. He shut the door and prayed to the Lord. The old proverb says, "Every true pulpit is set up in heaven," which means that the true preacher spends much time with God. If we don't pray to God for a blessing, if the foundation of the pulpit isn't laid in private prayer, our public ministry won't be a success. It's the same with you. Every real teacher's power must come from on high. If you never enter your prayer closet and shut the door and never plead at the mercy-seat for your child, how can you expect God will honor you in the child's conversion?

It's an excellent routine to actually take your children one by one into your room, alone, and pray with them. You will see your children converted when God leads you to individualize their spiritual statuses, to agonize for them, and to take them one by one and, with the door closed, to pray with them and for them. A prayer privately offered with a child wields much more influence than prayer publicly uttered in the class − not more influence with God, of course, but more influence with the child. While you are pouring out your soul, such prayer often becomes its own answer, because God can make your prayer work as a hammer to break the heart which mere words never touched. Pray with your children separately, and it will surely be the means of a great blessing. If this can't be done, there must still be prayer at any rate, much prayer, constant prayer, vehement prayer, the kind of prayer which won't take a denial, like Luther's prayer, which he called the bombarding of heaven.

Praying in this manner is like planting a cannon at heaven's gates to blow them open, because men prevail in prayer when they pray in this fervent fashion. They won't come away from the mercy seat until they can cry with Luther, "Vici, (I have conquered), I have gained the blessing for which I strove." From the days of John the Baptist until now, life is given unto the kingdom of the heavens, and the valiant take hold of it (Matthew 11:12). May we offer such intrepid, God-constraining, heaven-compelling prayers. The Lord won't permit us to seek His face in vain .

Implement Action

After praying, Elisha implemented the actions. Prayer and action must go together. Action without prayer − presumption. Prayer without action − hypocrisy. There lay the child, and there stood the revered man of God. Watch his singular process. He stoops over the corpse, and puts his mouth upon the child's mouth. The cold, dead mouth of the child was touched by the warm, living lips of the prophet. A vital stream of fresh, hot breath was sent down into the chill, stone-like passages of the dead mouth, throat, and lungs. Next, the holy man, with loving zeal of hopefulness, placed his eyes upon the child's eyes and his hands upon the child's hands. The warm hands of the old man covered the cold palms of the departed child. Then he stretched himself upon the child and covered him with his whole body, as though he could transfer his own life into the lifeless frame, and would either die with him or make him live.

We've all heard the tale of the goat hunter acting as guide to a fearful traveler. When they came to a dangerous part of the road, the hunter strapped the traveler firmly to himself and said, "Both of us or neither…" By this he meant, "Both of us shall live, or neither of us. We are one." In the same way, the prophet achieved a mysterious union between himself and the lad. In his own mind, it was resolved that he would either be chilled with the child's death or warm the child with his life. What does this teach us?

The lessons are many and obvious. As an illustration, we see, if we want to bring spiritual life

to a child, we must most vividly realize the child's state. It is dead, dead. God will have you feel that the child is as dead in trespasses and sins as you once were. God could have you come into contact with that death by painful, crushing, humbling sympathy.

Remember, in soul winning we should observe how our Master worked. So how did He work? When He wanted to raise us from death, what was necessary for Him to do? He needed to die Himself. There was no other way. And so it is with you. If you want to raise that dead child, you must feel the chill and horror of that child's death yourself. A dying man is needed to raise dying men. I can't believe you will ever pluck a brand from the burning without putting your hand near enough to feel the heat of the fire. You must have a clear sense of the dreadful wrath of God and of the terrors of the judgment to come, or you'll lack fervor in your work, and so lack one of the essentials of success. I don't think the preacher ever speaks satisfactorily on such topics until he feels them pressing upon him as a personal burden from the Lord. "I did preach in chains," said John Bunyan, "to men in chains." You can count on it. When the death in your children alarms, depresses, and overwhelms you, that's when God is about to bless you.

Consequently, realizing the child's state, and putting your mouth upon the child's mouth, and your hands upon their hands, next, you must strive to adapt as far as possible to the nature, habits, and temperament of the child. Your mouth must find child's words, so the child can understand what you mean. You must see things with a child's eyes. Your heart must feel a child's feelings and become his companion and friend. You must be a student of juvenile sin as well as a sympathizer in juvenile trials. As far as possible, you must enter into childhood's joys and griefs, so you can relate. Don't worry about the difficulty of this course of action or feel it to be humiliating. As a matter of fact, if you count any of this to be a hardship or too condescending, you have no business in the Sunday school. If anything difficult is required of you, you must do it and not think it difficult. God will not raise a dead child by you if you aren't willing to become all things to that child for the possibility that you may win its soul .

Stretch Yourself

Note that the prophet stretched himself upon the child. When you consider the size of a man versus a child, one would think it should say, "he made himself shorter or thinner." He was a full-grown man, and the other a mere lad.

Common sense would seem to dictate that he would have shrunk himself, right? But no, he stretched himself. And mark this, no stretching is harder than for a man to stretch himself to become childlike. He's no fool who can talk to children. A foolish person is much mistaken if he thinks that his mere silliness can interest boys and girls. This task needs our best sense of associating ideas in a new and unexpected manner. It involves our most diligent studies, our most serious thoughts, and our ripest ability to teach our little ones. You will not make the child alive spiritually until you have stretched yourself. While it seems a strange thing, yet it is so. The wisest man will need to exercise all his abilities if he hopes to become a successful teacher of the young.

Sympathy

In Elisha, we see a sense of the child's death and an adaptation of himself to his work, but, above all, we see sympathy. While Elisha felt the chill of the corpse, his personal warmth was entering into the dead body. This alone didn't raise the child, but God worked through it. The older man's body heat passed into the child and became the medium of bringing life to the dead. Let every teacher weigh these words of Paul, But we were gentle among you, as a mother feeding and caring for her children, loving you so much, that we were willing to give unto you, not only the gospel of God, but even our own souls, because ye are dear unto us (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8). The genuine soul winner knows what this means. As I mentioned earlier

in this book, when the Lord helps me preach, after I've delivered all my material and have fired off my shot so fast that my gun has grown hot, I have often rammed my soul into the gun and fired my heart at the congregation. Under God, this discharge has won the victory. By His Spirit, God will bless our hearty sympathy with His own truth and make it do that which the truth alone, coldly spoken, would not accomplish.

Here, then, is the secret: You must present your own soul to the young. Feel as if the ruin of that child would be your own ruin. You should have a sense that, if the child remains under the wrath of God, it is as true a grief to you as if you were under that wrath yourself.

Confess the child's sins before God as if they were your own, and stand as a priest before the Lord pleading on their behalf. The child was covered by Elisha's body. You must cover your class with your compassion and with the agonizing stretching forth of yourself before the Lord on its behalf. Behold in this miracle the modus operandi of raising the dead. The Holy Spirit remains mysterious in His operations, but the outward means is clearly revealed here.

The result of the prophet's work soon emerged: the flesh of the child waxed warm (2 Kings 4:34) . How pleased Elisha must have been, but I don't see that his pleasure and satisfaction caused him to relax his efforts. Never be satisfied with finding your children in a state with little hope. Have you had a girl come to you and cry, "Teacher, pray for me?" Be glad, for this is a clear sign the Spirit is moving, but look for more. Did you observe tears in a boy's eyes when you spoke of the love of Christ? Be thankful, because the flesh is growing warm, but don't stop there. Can you relax your efforts now? Think about it. You haven't gained your objective yet. It is life you want, not warmth alone. What you want in your cherished student isn't mere conviction but conversion. You desire not only a practical effect but regeneration − life from God − the life of Jesus. This is what your students need, and you must be content with nothing less.

Again, I must ask you to look at Elisha's example. The child begins to grow warm and what does he do? Then he returned and walked through the house to and fro (v. 35) . Notice the man of God's restlessness. He can't be relaxed. The child's body becomes warm, blessed be God for that, but he's not alive yet. So instead of sitting down in his chair by the table, the prophet walks back and forth with restless pacing, groaning, rapid breathing, while earnestly desiring and ill at ease. He couldn't bear to look at the disconsolate mother, or to hear her ask, "Is the child restored?" Instead, he continued pacing in the house as if his body couldn't rest because his soul wasn't satisfied. Imitate this devoted restlessness. When you see a boy getting somewhat moved, don't sit down and say, "The child's state is very hopeful, thank God! I am perfectly satisfied." You will never win the priceless gem of a saved soul in that way. You must feel sad, restless, and troubled if you ever hope to become a parent in the church.

Paul's words don't need to be explained, for you must know the meaning in your hearts. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you (Galatians 4:19). May the Holy Spirit give you such inward travail, such unrest, lack of peace, and sacred uneasiness until you see your hopeful students finally saved.

After a short period of walking back and forth, the prophet again went up, and stretched himself upon the child (v. 35) . What is good to do once is proper to do a second time. What is good twice is good seven times. There must be perseverance and patience. You were very eager last Sunday, so don't be remiss next Sunday. How easy it is to pull down in one day, what we have built up the day before. If God enables me to convince a child that I was really serious by one Sunday's work, let me not convince the child the next Sunday that I'm not sincere. If my past zeal has made the child's flesh grow warm, God forbid that my future chilliness would make the child's heart cold again. As surely as warmth went from Elisha to the child, so may cold go from you to your class unless you are in a resolute state of mind.

Elisha stretched himself on the bed again, with many a prayer, and many a sigh, and much believing, and at last his desire was granted. The child sneezed seven times, and the child

opened his eyes (v. 35) . Any form of action would indicate life and satisfy the prophet. The child sneezed − some say because he died with a disease of the head because he'd said to his father, "My head! my head!" − and the sneeze cleared the passages of life which had been blocked up. We don't know. The fresh air entering anew into the lungs might well compel a sneeze. The sound was nothing articulate or musical, but it signaled life.

This is all we should expect from young children when God gives them spiritual life. Some church-members expect a great deal more, but I am satisfied if they give any true sign of grace, however feeble or indistinct. If the dear child just comes to feel their lost condition and rests upon the finished work of Jesus, though we only find out the fact by an obscure statement. While it isn't something we would accept from a doctor of divinity, or expect from a grown-up, shouldn't we thank God and receive the child and nurse it for the Lord?

Perhaps, if Gehazi had been there, he wouldn't have thought much of this sneezing, because he hadn't stretched himself upon the child. But Elisha was convinced by it. Even so, if you and I have really agonized in prayer for souls, we will quickly notice the first sign of grace and will be thankful to God if the indication is nothing but a sneeze .

Then the child opened his eyes (v. 35) , and we will venture to say Elisha thought he had never seen such lovely eyes before. I don't know what color eyes they were, hazel or blue, but this I know, any eye which God helps you open will be beautiful to you.

I heard a teacher talking the other day about "a fine lad" who had been saved in his class. Another spoke of "a dear girl" in her class who loved the Lord. No doubt it would be a wonder if they weren't "fine" and "dear" in the eyes of the teacher who brought them to Jesus, because to Jesus Christ they are finer and dearer still. May you often gaze into eyes opened by divine grace as a result of your teaching, which otherwise would have been dark with the film of spiritual death. Then you will be favored indeed.

One word of caution. Ask yourself whether or not you may be a Gehazi. If among my readership there are Sunday school teachers who can do nothing more than carry the staff, I pity them. If this is the case for you, may God in His mercy give you life. How else can you expect to be the means of giving life to others? If Elisha had been a corpse, it would have been a hopeless task to expect life to be communicated through placing one corpse upon another. In the same way, it is vain for that little class of dead souls to gather around another dead soul such as you are. A dead mother, frost-bitten and cold, can't cherish her little one. What warmth or comfort can come to those who shiver before an empty grate? That's exactly what you are. May you experience a work of grace in your own soul first. Then the blessed and eternal Spirit, who alone can bring life to souls, can make you the instrument of quickening many to the glory of His grace. My fervent prayers are with you that you may be blessed and be made a blessing.

Chapter 1 3

How to Win Souls for Christ

I consider it a great privilege to speak to groups of preachers and teachers. Truthfully, I wish I were more fit for the task. Even as my words are captured in the pages of this book, silver of eloquent speech and gold of deep thought have I none, but such as I have, I give unto you.

What Is It to Win a Soul?

What is it to win a soul? When it comes to the winning of souls, I hope you believe in the old-fashioned way. Everything seems to be shaken and shifted from the old foundations nowadays. Today, it seems we are expected to draw out or evolve the good from men and bring it to the surface – good that is already in them. You can find much good if you make the attempt, but I'm afraid in the process of this type of evolution you will develop devils. I don't know what else you can expect out of human nature, though, because humankind is as full of sin as an egg is full of meat, and the unfolding progress of sin must be everlasting harm.

We all believe we must approach soul winning with a desire in God's name to see all things made new. This old creature is dead and corrupt and must be buried, and the sooner the better. Jesus has come so there can be a passing away of the old things and a making of all things new. In the process of our work, we endeavor to bless men by trying to make them moderate – not excessive, Let your moderation be known unto all men (Philippians 4:5a). May God bless all work of that sort.

However, if we produce a world of total abstainers and leave them all unbelievers, we have failed. We must drive at something more than temperance, because we believe men must be born again. It's good that even a corpse should be clean. Therefore, the unregenerate should be moral. It would be a great blessing if they were cleansed of the vices which make this world reek in the nostrils of God and good men. But that's not the focus of our work, which is to see the dead in sin live, that they be made alive with spiritual life, and that Christ would reign in lives where the prince of the power of the air now has sway.

Preach with this objective: that men quit sinning and flee to Christ for pardon. So by His Spirit, they may be made new and become as much in love with everything that is holy as they are now with everything sinful. Aim at a radical cure. The axe is laid at the root of the trees. Just changing the old nature isn't satisfactory for those who gather around you in the streets. You seek the imparting of a new nature, by a divine power, so they may live unto God.

Our objective is to turn the world upside down, or, in other words, that where sin abounded grace may much more abound (Romans 5:20). We aim at a miracle. It's good to determine that objective at the start. Some think they ought to lower their note to the spiritual ability of the hearer, but that's a mistake. According to those who think this way, you ought not to urge a man

to repent and believe unless you believe that he can, of himself, repent and believe .

My reply is a declaration. I command men in the name of Jesus to repent and believe the gospel, though I know they can do nothing of the kind apart from the grace of God. I'm not sent to work according to what my own reason might suggest but according to the orders of my Lord and Master. Ours is the miraculous method which comes from the endowment of the Spirit of God who asks His ministers to perform wonders in the name of the holy child Jesus. We are sent to say to blind eyes, "See," to deaf ears, "Hear," to dead hearts, "Live," and even to Lazarus rotting in that grave and stinking – "Lazarus, come forth." Dare we do this?

It is wise for us to begin with the conviction that we are utterly powerless unless our Master has sent us and is with us. But if He who sent us is with us, all things are possible to him who believes (Mark 9:23). Preachers, if you are about to stand up to see what you can do, it is wise for you to hurry up and sit down. However, if you stand up to prove what your almighty Lord and Master can do through you, then infinite possibilities lie before you. There is no limit to what God can accomplish if He works via your heart and voice.

The other Sunday morning, before I entered the pulpit, when my dear brothers, the deacons and elders of my church, gathered around me for prayer as is their custom, one of them said, "Lord, take him as a man takes a tool in his hand when he gets a firm hold of it, and then uses it to work his own will with it." That's what all workers need, that God may be the Worker through them. You are to be instruments in the hands of God, and you are to actively put forth all your faculties and forces which the Lord has given to you. But never depend upon your personal power. Instead, rest only upon that sacred, mysterious, divine energy which works in us, through us, and with us, upon the hearts and minds of men.

At times, we've all been greatly disappointed with some of our converts, haven't we? The fact is, if they are our converts, we will always be disappointed with them. But when they prove to be the Lord's work, we shall greatly rejoice over them. When the power of grace works in them, "Glory to God!" It will be for God's glory and nothing else but glory, because grace brings glory. However, mere oratory only creates sham and shame in the long run.

When we preach and think of a pretty, flowery passage or a neat poetic paragraph, I wish we could be restrained from using them by that same fear which acted upon Paul when he said he wouldn't use the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void (1 Corinthians 1:17). The gospel preacher must rethink his own ways and say, "I can say that very prettily, but then they might notice how I said it. Therefore, I will say it in such a way that they will only notice the fundamental value of the truth which I teach them." It's not the way we deliver the gospel, nor our method of illustrating it, which wins souls. The gospel itself does the work in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It is to Him we must look for the thorough conversion of men.

A miracle is to be performed. By which, our hearers shall become the products of that mighty power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly place far above all principality and power. For this to happen, we must look outside of ourselves to the living God. We must go in for thorough, downright conversion and fall back upon the power of the Holy Spirit. If it is to be a miracle, it is clear God must work it. It isn't to be accomplished by our reasoning, persuasion, or threatening. It can only come from the Lord.

How Can We Expect to Be Endowed with the Spirit of God to Go Forth in His Power?

Since the winning of souls lies here, in what way can we hopefully expect to be endowed with the Spirit of God and to go forth in His power? The answer to this isn't one-size fits all. A great deal depends upon the condition of the man himself. I believe we have never laid enough stress on the work of God within our own selves in its relation to our service of God. A man dedicated to the service and worship of God may be charged with divine energy to the full, so that

everybody around him can't help but see it. They can't tell what it is, where it comes from, or where it goes, but they perceive something about that man which is far beyond the common order of things.

At another time, that same person may come across as ineffective and dull, and even be conscious of it himself. Like Samson, he shakes himself as at other times but can't muster the command to do a mighty deed. It's clear that Samson himself had to be in a right condition in order to win victories. With the champion's locks clipped, the Philistines would laugh at him. If the Lord's power is gone from a man, he has no power left for useful service.

Look carefully to your own condition before God. Take care of the home farm and look after your own flocks and herds. Unless your walk is close with God, unless you dwell in that clear light which surrounds the throne of God and which is only known to those who are in fellowship with the Eternal, you will go forth from your chamber and hurry to your work, but nothing will come of it. It is true the vessel is but an earthen one. Yet, it has its place in the divine order of things. However, it won't be filled with the divine treasure unless it is a clean vessel, and unless in other respects it is a vessel fit for the Master's use. Let me show you ways in which much in soul winning depends upon the man himself.

Acting as Witnesses

We win some souls to Christ by acting as witnesses. We stand up and testify for the Lord Jesus Christ concerning certain truths. I have never had the great privilege of being bamboozled by a lawyer, but I've sometimes wondered what I would do if I were put into the witness box to be examined and cross examined. I think I would simply stand up and tell the truth as far as I knew it and wouldn't make an attempt to display my wit, language, or judgment. If I simply gave straightforward answers to his questions, I should be able to beat any lawyer under heaven. But the difficulty is, that so often when a witness is put into the box, he is more conscious of himself than of what he has to say. Consequently, he is soon worried, annoyed, and bored, and, by losing his temper, he fails to be a good witness for the cause. In the same way, open-air preachers are often bamboozled. The Devil's advocates are sure to come against you, and he has a great number of them constantly retained in his service. If you ask yourself, "How shall I answer this man cleverly, so as to get a victory over him?" you will be foolish.

The one thing you have to do is to bear witness to the truth. A witty answer is often a very proper thing. But at the same time, a gracious answer is better, Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one (Colossians 4:6). Try to remind yourself: It doesn't matter whether the man proves me to be a fool or not. Because I know I'm already content to be thought a fool for Christ's sake and not to care about my reputation. I have to bear witness to what I know, and with the help of God I will do so boldly. If the interrupter questions me about other things, I shall tell him that I do not come to bear witness about other matters, but this one thing I do. To one point I will speak and to no other.

The witnessing man must himself be saved and be sure of it. Perhaps you once enjoyed full assurance, and now you have to sorrowfully confess, "Sadly, I don't feel the full power of the gospel on my own heart." However, you can still truly add, "I still know that it is true, because I've seen it save others, and I know no other power can save me."

Perhaps, even that faltering testimony, so truly honest, might bring a tear into your opponent's eye and make him feel sympathy for you. John Bunyan said, "I preached sometimes without hope, like a man in chains to men in chains, and when I heard my own fetters rattle, still I told others that there was deliverance for them, and I invited them to look to the great Deliverer." I wouldn't have stopped Mr. Bunyan in preaching in this way. At the same time, it's a great thing to be able to declare from your own personal experience that the Lord has broken the gates of brass and cut the bars of iron in two.

Those who hear our witness ask, “Are you sure of it?”

Sure of it? I’m as sure of it as I’m sure that I’m a living man. They call this dogmatism. Never mind about that. A man ought to know what he is preaching about or let him sit down. If I had any doubt about the matters I preach from this pulpit, I would be ashamed to remain the pastor of my church. But I preach what I know and testify what I have seen. If I am mistaken, I am heartily and intensely mistaken, and I risk my soul and all its eternal interests upon the truth of what I preach. If the gospel which I preach does not save me, I shall never be saved, for what I proclaim to others is my own personal ground of trust. I have no private lifeboat. The ark to which I invite others holds myself and all I have.

A good witness ought to know all that he is going to say. He should feel himself at home and familiar with his subject. Say he’s called as a witness in a certain case of robbery. He knows what he saw and has to make a declaration regarding that only. They begin to question him about a picture in the house, or the color of a dress which was hanging in the wardrobe. He answers, “You are going beyond my recollection. I can only bear witness to what I saw.” What we do know and what we don’t know would make two very large books, and we may safely ask to be let alone as to the second volume.

Say what you know and sit down, but stay calm and composed while speaking about what you personally know. You will never feel at home with the people or properly indulge your emotions in preaching until you are at home with your subject. When you know your purpose, your mind will be free to stay focused with an intense desire. For those open-air preachers reading this, I say, know the gospel from beginning to end and know where you are in preaching it. You can’t preach with appropriate emotion unless you feel at home with your doctrine. When you do stand up to preach, be as bold, earnest, and persistent as you please.

Face the people feeling you are going to tell them something worth hearing, about which you are quite sure, which to you is your very life. In every outdoor assembly, honest hearts are present – at every indoor assembly too. They hunger to hear honest beliefs, will accept them, and be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pleaders for Jesus Christ

But you are not only witnesses. You are also pleaders for the Lord Jesus Christ. In a pleader, much depends upon the man. It seems as if the sign or indicator of Christianity in some preachers wasn’t a tongue of fire but a block of ice. You wouldn’t want to have a lawyer stand up and plead your cause in a cool, deliberate way, never showing the slightest care about whether you were found guilty of murder or acquitted. Could you endure his indifference when you were likely to be hanged? No. You’d wish to silence such a false advocate. In the same way, when a man has to speak for Christ and isn’t sincere, let him go to bed. You smile, but isn’t it better that he go to bed than send a whole congregation to sleep without their going to bed?

If we are to prevail with men, we must love them. We must be downright intense and heartfelt. Some have a genuine love for people, while others have a genuine dislike for people. I know gentlemen, whom I admire in a way, who seem to think the working classes are a shockingly bad segment of society to be kept in check and strictly governed. With such views, they will never convert the workingmen. To win men, you must feel that you are one of them. If they are a sad lot, you are one of them. If they are lost sinners, you are one of them. If they need a Savior, you are one of them (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). To the very chief of sinners, you should preach with this text before you, Such were some of you (1 Corinthians 6:11). Grace alone makes us differ from them, and that grace is what we preach. Genuine love to God and fervent love to man make up the great qualification for a pleader.

I further believe, although certain people deny it, that the influence of fear is to be exercised over the minds of men. I also believe it ought to operate upon the mind of the preacher himself.

By faith Noah, having received revelation of things not seen as yet, with great care prepared an ark to the saving of his house (Hebrews 11:7). Noah feared for the salvation of this world from perishing in the flood. When a man gets to fear for others so that his heart cries out, “They will perish, they will perish, they will sink to hell, they will be forever banished from the presence of the Lord,” and when this fear oppresses his soul, and weighs him down, and drives him to go out and preach with tears − he will plead with men to gain the victory.

To know the dread of the Lord is the means of teaching us to persuade and not to speak harshly. Some have used dread of the Lord to terrify, but Paul used it to persuade. Let us copy him. Say, “We have come out to tell you that the world is on fire, and you must flee for your lives and escape to the mountain, or you will be consumed.” We must warn with the full conviction that it is true, or we shall be looked at as the boy who in foolishness cried, “Wolf!”

Something of the shadow of the last dreadful day must fall upon our spirit to accent the conviction of our message of mercy, or we will miss the pleader’s true power. We must tell people of their pressing need of a Savior and show them we perceive their need and feel for them, or else we aren’t likely to turn them to the Savior.

He who pleads for Christ should be moved himself with the prospect of judgment day. When I come in at the door behind the pulpit and catch sight of the vast crowd before me, I frequently feel depressed and disheartened. Think of these thousands of immortal souls gazing through the lenses of those wistful eyes. I am to preach to them all and will be responsible for their blood if I’m not faithful to them. I tell you, there are times it makes me feel ready to turn around and go back. But fear isn’t all I feel. I am carried by the hope and belief that God intends to bless these people through the Word which He enables me to deliver. I believe everybody in that crowd is sent there by God for some purpose, and I’m sent to achieve that purpose.

Often when I am preaching, I think to myself, “Who is being converted right now?” It never occurs to me that the Word of the Lord will fail. That can never be. I often feel sure people are being converted, and that at all times God is glorified by the testimony of His truth. As you share God’s good news, you can count on your hopeful conviction that God’s Word can’t return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11), as a great encouragement to your hearers as well as to yourself. Your enthusiastic confidence that they will be converted may be like the little finger of a mother held out to her baby to help it make its way to her. The fire within your hearts may dart a spark into their souls by which the flame of spiritual life will be kindled in them. As soul winners, let us all learn the art of pleading with the souls of men.

Chapter 1 4

Be Examples

To open-air preachers, preachers, and all other Christian people, I say we have not only to be witnesses and pleaders, but we must also be examples. One of the most successful ways of taking wild ducks is the use of the decoy bird. The decoy duck enters the net, and the others follow it. In the Christian church, we need to use more of the holy art of decoy. By this I mean, our example in regards to our own account of coming to Christ, in living godly lives in the midst of a perverse generation, along with examples of our joy and sorrow, our holy submission to the divine will in the time of trouble, our example in all manner of gracious ways. Our daily examples will be the means of persuading others to enter the way of life. You can't, of course, stand up in the street and tell of your example, but street preachers are known better than they think. Someone in that crowd may be an unknown part of the speaker's private life. I once heard of an out-of-doors preacher, to whom a hearer cried out, "Ah, Jack, you dare not preach like that at your own door!" It so happened, unfortunately, that Mr. John had offered to fight one of his neighbors a little while before, and consequently it wasn't likely he would have done much preaching close to home. This made the interruption an awkward one.

If any man's life at home is unworthy, he should travel several miles away before he stands to preach. Then, when he stands up, he should say nothing. The public knows us. They know far more about us than we imagine, and what they don't know they make up. At the same time, our walk and conversation should be the most powerful part of our ministry. This is what's called being consistent, when lips and life agree.

People Surrounding the Preacher

I have said the working of the Holy Spirit depends largely upon the man himself, but I must add that much also depends on the kind of people surrounding the preacher. An open-air preacher who goes out more or less alone is in a rather unfortunate position, because it's extremely helpful to be connected with a vibrant, living church which will pray for you. If you can't find such a church in the area where you labor to serve the Lord, the next best thing is to get half-a-dozen brothers or sisters who will back you up. This group would go out with you and, especially, will pray with you. I understand some preachers are so independent they think they can do without helpers, but they will be wise if they don't adopt solitude. They can look at the matter in this way: By bringing in half-a-dozen men with me, I'll be doing these young men good and will be training them to be workers. If you can partner with half-a-dozen men who aren't all very young but somewhat advanced in their knowledge of divine truth, the association will work to your mutual advantage. I admit that, although God has largely blessed me in His work, none of the credit is due to me at all. The credit goes to those dear friends at the Tabernacle and all over the world, who make me the special subject of their prayers. A man ought to do well with such people around him as I have. My dear friend and deacon, Mr. William Olney, once said, "So far, our minister has led us forward, and we have followed heartily. Everything has been a success. Don't you believe in his leadership?"

The people cried, “Yes.”

My dear friend said, “If our pastor leads us to a ditch which looks as if it couldn’t be crossed, let’s fill it up with our bodies and carry him across.” This was impressive talk and the ditch filled itself almost at once. If you have a true friend, your strength is more than doubled.

And what a blessing a good wife is. Women wouldn’t be in their right place if they began to preach in the streets, but they can make their husbands happy and comfortable when they come home, and that will encourage them to preach all the better. Some can even help in another way if they are prudent and gentle. They can tenderly hint that their spouse was a little out of line in certain small matters, and he may take your hint and put himself right.

A good brother once asked me to give him some instruction. He put it to me like this, “The only instructor I’ve had is my wife, who had a better education than I was able to have. I used to say, ‘We was,’ and ‘Us did it,’ and she quietly hinted that people might laugh at me if I didn’t attend to grammar.” In this way, his wife became a professor of the English language to him. She was worth her weight in gold to him, and he knew it. Those who have such helpers ought to thank God daily for them.

Along with this, it’s very helpful to join in a brotherly association or group with warmhearted Christians who know more than we do and who will benefit us by prudent hints. God may bless us for the sake of others when He might not bless us for our own sake. You have probably heard the story of the man who had preached and won many souls to Christ. He congratulated himself for the outcome. One night, an angel revealed to him that at the last great day he would have none of the honor for it. He asked the angel in his dream, “Who then will get the credit for it?” The angel replied, “That deaf old man who sits on the pulpit stairs and prays for you was the means of the blessing.”

Let’s be thankful for that deaf man, that old woman, or those praying friends who bring down a blessing on us by their intercessions. The Spirit of God will bless two when He might not bless one. Abraham didn’t get one of the five cities saved all on his own even though he offered a weighty prayer. Beyond this, his nephew Lot was about the poorest sort that could be found. He didn’t have more than half-an-ounce of prayer in him, but that tiny fragment turned the scale and Zoar was preserved. Therefore, add your odd half-ounce of prayer to the mightier weight of the pleadings of eminent saints, because they might need it.

To those of you called to be open-air preachers, I am not trying to instruct you. Some of you could better instruct me. Yet, from what I hear, I must be getting rather old. A woman, at the beginning of this year (1887), was trying to get something out of me. She said, “I remember hearing your dear voice more than forty years ago.”

“Heard my voice forty years ago! where was that?”

She said, “You were preaching at the bottom of Pentonville Hill, near where Mr. Sawday’s chapel is.”

“Well, wasn’t it more than forty years ago?”

“Yes,” she said, “It might be fifty.”

“I suppose I was quite young then?”

“Oh, yes!” she said, “you were such a dear young man.”

That, of course, was a needless assurance. I don’t think she thought I was quite so dear when I told her I never preached at the bottom of Pentonville Hill. And fifty years ago, I was only three years old. I also went on to tell her that I thought it shameful for her to suppose I would give her money for telling falsehoods. However, I shall postulate upon the woman’s statement and suppose myself to be that venerable person she described and assert that if we are going to win souls, we must go all in with downright labor and hard work.

Commit to Hard Work

If we are going to win souls, first, we must work at our preaching. You're not growing distrustful of the use of preaching, are you? I hope you don't grow weary of it, though you certainly sometimes must weary in it. Go on with your preaching and stick with it. In the great day, when the official list of names of all who are converted through fine music, church decoration, religious exhibitions, and entertainment is read, they will amount to the tenth part of nothing. But the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe will always please God. Keep to your preaching, and if you do anything besides preaching, don't let it throw your preaching into the background. In the first place preach, and in the second place preach, and in the third place preach.

Believe in preaching the love of Christ. Believe in preaching the atoning sacrifice. Believe in preaching the new birth, and believe in preaching the whole counsel of God, Therefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of everyone. For I have not refrained from declaring unto you the full counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). The old hammer of the gospel will still break the rock in pieces. The ancient fire of Pentecost will still burn among the multitude. Try nothing new but go on preaching. If we all preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, the results will astound us. Because the power of the tongue has no end .

Consider the power of a bad tongue, what great harm it can do. Won't God put more power into a good tongue if we just use it correctly? Look at the power of fire. A single spark can set an entire city ablaze. In the same way, the Spirit of God is with us, and we don't need to calculate how much or what we can do. You can't calculate the ability of a flame to develop, and there is no end to the possibilities of divine truth spoken with enthusiasm born of the Spirit of God. Have great hope despite those shameless midnight streets, despite lavish bars at the corner of every street, despite the wickedness of the rich, despite the ignorance of the poor. Go on. Go on in God's name. Because if the preaching of the gospel doesn't save men, nothing will. If the Lord's own way of mercy fails, then hang the skies in mourning and blot out the sun in everlasting midnight, because we race toward nothing but the black of darkness. Salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus is the ultimatum of God. So rejoice that it can't fail. Believe without reserve and go straight ahead with the preaching of the Word.

Private Conversation

True-hearted, open-air preachers will also join sincere private conversation to their preaching . In the Tabernacle, we've seen many people converted by the personal conversation of certain brothers. These men are all around while I'm preaching. I remember one Monday night when a brother was speaking to me, and suddenly he vanished before he finished his whispered sentence. I never learned what he was going to say, but I quickly spotted him in the left-hand gallery, sitting in the pew with a lady I didn't know. After the service, I asked him, "Where did you go?"

He said, "A gleam of sunlight came in at the window. It made me see a face which looked so sad that I hurried upstairs and took my seat in the pew close to the woman with the sorrowful countenance."

"Did you cheer her?"

"Oh, yes! She readily received the Lord Jesus. And just as she did so, I noticed another eager face – a young man. I asked the woman to wait in the pew until after the service and went after the young man."

He prayed with both of these people and would not be satisfied until they gave their hearts to the Lord. That is the way to be on the alert. As I've mention before, we need a body of sharpshooters to pick out their men one by one. When we fire great guns from the pulpit, execution is accomplished but many are missed. We want loving spirits to go around and deal with individual cases one-on-one with pointed personal warnings and encouragements. Open-

air preachers shouldn't only address the hundreds but should be ready to pounce upon the individuals. He should have others with him who possess the same successful art. How much more effective could preaching in the streets be if every open-air preacher were accompanied by a group of people ready to drive his nails home for him by personal conversation.

Last Sunday night, a dear brother told us a short story I'll never forget. He was at Croydon Hospital one night, on one of those appointed visits. All the door-keepers had gone home. It was time to close for the night. He was the only person left in the hospital, except for the physician, when a boy came running in shouting that there had been a railway accident. He said, "Someone must go to the station with a stretcher."

The doctor asked my brother, "Will you take one end of the stretcher if I take the other?"

"Oh, yes!" He was happy to help, and so away went the doctor and the pastor with the stretcher. They brought a sick man back to the hospital. As my brother told the story, he said, "I visited the hospital often during the next week or two, because I was very interested in the man whom I had helped carry."

I believe he will always take an interest in that man, because he once felt the weight of him. When you know how to carry a man on your heart and have felt the burden of his situation, you will have his name engraved upon your soul. So you who privately talk to people, as you do, you are feeling the weight of souls. I believe this is what many regular preachers need to know better. If they do, they will preach better.

Have a Tract Ready

When the opportunities to preach or talk privately are not available, have a tract ready. This is often an effectual tool. However, some tracts wouldn't convert a beetle, because there isn't enough in them to interest a fly. Get good striking tracts or none at all. A telling, touching gospel tract can often be the seed of eternal life so don't go out without your tracts.

Visit the People

Besides giving a tract, if you can, try and find out where a person lives who frequently hears you, so you can visit him. What a fine thing is to receive a visit from an open-air preacher. "Why," the woman, says, "Bill, that man has come to see you. The gentleman who preaches at the corner of the street. Shall I tell him to come in?"

"Oh, yes! I've heard him many times. He's a good fellow." Visit as much as you can, for it will be a benefit to you as well as to the people.

Send a Letter

There is also power in a letter to an individual. Some people still have a kind of superstitious reverence for a letter, and when they get a sincere letter from a respected person such as yourself, they think a great deal of it. And who knows? Perhaps, a note received by post can hit the man your sermon missed. Young people who aren't able to preach might do much good if they write letters to their young friends about their souls. They can speak quite plainly with their pens, though they might be shy when speaking with their tongues. Let us save men by all the means under heaven.

Let's prevent men from going down to hell by any means. The fact is, we aren't half as earnest as we ought to be. Remember the dying young man who said to his brother, "My brother, how could you have been so indifferent to my soul as you have been?"

He answered, "I have not been indifferent to your soul. Indeed, I frequently spoke to you about it."

"Oh, yes!" the dying man said. "You spoke, but somehow I think if you had remembered that I

was going down to hell, you would have been more sincere with me. You would have wept over me, and, as my brother, you wouldn't have allowed me to be lost." Let no one say this of you.

I hear most people notice that when they become zealous they do such odd things and say such strange things. Let them say strange things. Let them do strange things. They result from genuine earnestness. We don't want gimmicky tricks and performances that are nothing more than a mere sham of sincerity. What we want is times of real white-heat earnestness. Where you see that, it's a shame to be too critical. You must let a great storm rage in its own way and let a living heart speak as it can. If you are zealous but can't speak, your earnestness will invent its own method of working out its purpose. It is said that Hannibal melted the rocks with vinegar. In the same way, earnestness will dissolve the rocky hearts of men one way or another. May the Spirit of God rest upon you, one and all, for Jesus Christ's sake.

Chapter 1 5

The Cost of Being a Soul Winner

Those trying to bring souls to Jesus yearn and pray to be useful, but do you know what this involves? You'll need to prepare yourself to see and suffer many things which you'd rather not have to experience. I'm talking about things you would not otherwise have to experience personally. These will become your portion if the Lord uses you for the salvation of others.

An ordinary person can enjoy a good night's sleep, but a surgeon will be called up at all hours. A farming man can take it easy at his fireside at the end of the day, but if he becomes a shepherd, he must be out among the lambs and endure all kinds of weather for them. Even Paul says, Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:10). For this cause, we will be made to undergo experiences which will surprise us.

Some years ago, I was under the power of a fearful depression of spirit. Certain troublesome events had happened to me, and I was so unwell that my heart sank within me. Out of the depths, I was forced to cry out to the Lord. Just before I went away to Mentone for rest, I suffered greatly in body but far more in soul, because my spirit was overwhelmed. Under this pressure, I preached a sermon based on the words, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46). I was more qualified to preach from that text than I ever expected to be. I felt the horror of a soul forsaken of God to the full extent. In reality, I hope few of my brothers can enter so deeply into those heart-breaking words. It wasn't a desirable experience. I still tremble at the very idea of passing through that eclipse of soul ever again, and pray I never have to suffer in that fashion again unless the same result depends on it.

That night, after my sermon, a man came into the vestry who was as nearly insane as he could be and not be committed to an asylum. His eyes seemed ready to pop from his head, and he said that he would have utterly despaired if he hadn't heard that message. It made him feel that one other man alive understood his feelings and could describe his experience. I talked with him, tried to encourage him, and asked him to come again on Monday night when I would have a little more time to talk with him. I saw this brother again and said, "I think there's hope for you." I was glad the words I delivered were so fitting to his situation. He seemed to push aside the comfort I presented, but I could still see the precious truth at work on his mind, and that the storm of his soul would soon subside into a deep calm. That was five years ago.

Now wait until you hear what happened last night. I preached from the text, "The Almighty hath vexed my soul," and strange as it may seem, after the service, in walked this same brother who had visited me five years before. He looked as different as noonday from midnight, or as life from death. I said to him, "I'm glad to see you, because I've often thought about you and wondered whether you were brought into perfect peace. "

As I told you, I'd gone to Mentone. This man also went into the country, so we hadn't met for five years. To my question, this brother said, "You said there was hope for me, and I'm sure you will be glad to know I've walked in the sunlight from that day till now. Everything is changed and altered with me."

As soon as I saw this poor despairing man the first time, I blessed God. Because that fearful experience I had prepared me to sympathize with him and guide him. Last night, when I saw him perfectly restored, my heart overflowed with gratitude to God for my former sorrowful feelings. I would go into the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit. It was good for me to have been afflicted, so I might know how to speak a word at the right time to one who is weary.

Suppose that by some painful operation you could have your right arm made a little longer. I don't suppose you would care to undergo the operation. But if you foresaw that by enduring the pain, you'd be able to reach out and save drowning men who would otherwise sink before your eyes, I think you would willingly bear the agony and pay the heavy fee to the surgeon in order to be able to rescue others.

If you want to acquire soul winning power, consider this: You will have to go through fire and water, through doubt and despair, through mental torment and soul distress. It won't be the same with everyone, of course, but God's preparation will be according to the work allotted you. You must go into the fire if you are to pull others out of it. You will have to dive into the floods if you are to draw others out of the water. You can't work a fire escape without feeling the scorch of the blaze, nor man a lifeboat without being drenched with the waves. Consider Joseph's example. In order for him to preserve his brothers alive, he himself had to go down into Egypt. In the same way, for Moses to lead the people through the wilderness, he first had to spend forty years there with his flock. Payson truly said, "If anyone asks to be made a successful minister, he knows not what he asks, and it becomes him to consider whether he can drink deeply of Christ's bitter cup and be baptized with His baptism" (Mark 10:38).

A prayer offered by my esteemed brother, Mr. Levinsohn, who is of the seed of Abraham, is what led me to think of this. He owed his own conversion to a city missionary also from Israel. If that city missionary hadn't been a Jew himself, he wouldn't have known the heart of the young stranger, nor would he have won his ear for the gospel message. Men are usually won to Christ by suitable instruments, and this suitability often lies in the power to sympathize.

A key opens a door, because it fits the wards of the lock. An earnest sermon touches the heart, because it meets the state of that heart. You and I have to be formed into all sorts of shapes to suit all manner of minds and hearts. Paul explained it this way: And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to those that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain those that are under the law; to those that are without law, as without law (being not without law of God, but under the law of Christ), that I might gain those that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to everyone, that I might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). These processes must be hammered out upon us also, but let us cheerfully bear whatever the Holy Spirit works within our spirits. So we can be a larger blessing to our fellow man.

Lay your all on the altar. Give yourself up as a worker into the Lord's hand. You who are subtle and refined may have to be shocked into the power needed to benefit the coarse and ignorant. You who are wise and educated may have to become fools, so you can win fools to Jesus, because fools need saving. And many of them won't be saved except by ways men of culture can't appreciate.

How nicely some people go to work when the thing needed isn't attention to manners but energy. On the other hand, some are fierce when the desired thing is tact and gentleness and not force. This has to be learned. We must be trained for it like dogs are trained to follow game. Here is one example. The brother is an elegant sort, and he wishes to speak zealously with real desire but must balance it with elaborate exactness too. He writes out a nicely-prepared message, with carefully arranged notes. Sadly, he leaves the priceless document at home. What will he do?

He's too gracious to give up, so he decides he will try to speak without his notes. He begins nicely and initially gets through it – clear and without force. But what comes next? He gazes upward trying to recall what comes next. What should be said? What can be said? The good man flounders but can't swim. He struggles to land and rises from the flood. You can hear him mentally saying, "I give up," but that's not so. He speaks again. He gathers confidence and grows into an impressive speaker.

The Lord uses such humiliations as these to prepare him to do His work efficiently. In our beginnings, we are too refined to be qualified or too dignified to be good. We must serve an apprenticeship and learn our trade like this. A lead pencil is of no use until it is cut. The fine cedar wood must be cut away and the lead inside unobstructed, so it can be used to mark and write freely.

The knife of affliction is sharp but helpful. You can't delight in it, but faith can teach you to value it. Aren't you willing to pass through every ordeal necessary, if by them you may save some? If this isn't your spirit, you better go back to working your farm or trading merchandise, because no one will ever win a soul who isn't prepared to suffer whatever is needed within the scope of possibility for that soul's sake.

A good deal of those reading this book may have to suffer through fear. Yet, that fear may help stir your soul and bring it into a fit posture for the Lord's work. At the least, it may drive your heart to prayer, and that alone is a great part of the necessary preparation of soul winning.

A good man I know describes one of his early attempts at visiting and speaking to individuals about their spiritual condition in this way: "On the way to the residence of the person I was to talk to, I thought about how I would introduce the subject and all that I would say. All the while, I was trembling and agitated. As I walked up to the door, it seemed as if I would sink through the stones. My courage was gone. As I lifted my hand to the knocker, it dropped at my side without touching it. I turned and walked partly down the steps from sheer fear. A moment's reflection sent me to the knocker again, and I entered the house. The sentences I uttered and the prayer I offered were very broken, but I was thankful that my fears and cowardice didn't prevail. The 'ice was broken.'" That process of ice-breaking must be gone through, and its result is highly beneficial. Once the ice was broken, he shared with them, "Jesus has died for you and now His people live for you! We can't offer an atoning sacrifice for you, and there is no need that we should. However, we would still gladly make sacrifices for your soul's sake. We will do anything, be anything, give anything, and suffer anything if we might only bring you to Christ. I assure you that many of us feel like this. Won't you care for yourselves? Shall we be earnest about your souls, while you treat your soul as something of very little importance? I plead God will grant you wisdom, and may that infinite wisdom lead you to our dear Savior's feet at once. "

The Soul Winner's Reward

The other day on my way to a meeting, I spotted a notice posted outside the police station. The striking poster offered a large reward to anyone who uncovered evidence and could bring the perpetrators of a great crime to justice. No doubt our legislators know the only thing which will motivate the companions of these assassins to come forward is the chance of a huge reward. The customary informer earns so much scorn and hate that few can be induced to tell all even when piles of gold are offered. It's a poor business at best.

In contrast, it is far more pleasant to learn a reward is offered for bringing men to mercy and that the payment ranks higher than the one extended for bringing men to justice. Furthermore, from a practical standpoint, it's worthy to point out that it's much more within our reach. We can't all hunt down criminals, but we can all rescue the perishing. Thank God assassins and burglars are comparatively few, but sinners who need to be pursued and saved swarm around us everywhere. To put it into perspective for you all, no one needs to think of themselves as shut

out from the rewards love bestows on all who do her service.

At the mention of the word reward , some will prick up their ears and mutter “legalism” − reliance on works for salvation. But the reward we speak of has nothing to do with a debt owed but of the free unmerited love and favor of God known as grace. It is enjoyed, not with proud conceit of our own goodness or excellence, but with the grateful delight of humility.

Others will whisper, “Isn’t this a low and corrupt motive close to bribery?” We can easily reply, “No more so than the spirit of Moses, who viewed suffering for the sake of Christ as a greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he looked ahead to his reward” (Hebrews 11:26). In this matter, it all depends on what the reward is. If it happens to be the joy of doing good, the comfort of having glorified God, and the delight of pleasing the Lord Jesus, then the desire to attempt to save our fellow-men from going down into the pit is in itself a grace from the Lord. And if we don’t succeed in our effort, the Lord will still say, as He did of David’s intent to build a temple, thou didst well that it was in thy heart (1 Kings 8:18). Even if the souls we seek persist in unbelief, even if they despise, reject, and ridicule us, it will still be a divine work to have made the attempt. If no rain comes out of the cloud, it has still screened off the fierce heat of the sun. All is not lost even if the greater design isn’t accomplished.

What if we only learn how to join the Savior in His tears and cry? How often I desired to gather thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (Matthew 23:37). It is a grand position to be allowed to stand on the same platform with Jesus and weep with Him. We are the better for such sorrows, even if it effects no one else the same way.

But, thank God, our labors in the Lord aren’t in vain. I believe most reading this book, who have really tried in the power of the Holy Spirit, by Scriptural teaching, and by prayer to bring others to Jesus, have been successful. For the few who haven’t succeeded, I recommend they look over their motive, spirit, work, and prayer from a firm position and begin again. Perhaps, it will help them work wiser, become more believable and humble, and to function more in the power of the Holy Spirit.

They must act as farmers do after a poor harvest − plow again in hope. They ought not get disheartened but should be encouraged. We should be eager to find the reason for the failure, if there is one, and we should be ready to learn from all our fellow-laborers. Above all, if there is any way we can save some, we must steadfastly resolve that whatever happens we will leave no stone unturned to effect the salvation of those around us. Those of us who get together to pray, for the most part, have been successful beyond our expectations. God has blessed us, not beyond our desires, but beyond our hopes.

Often, I’m surprised at the mercy of God to myself. I’ve preached poor sermons I could cry over when I get home, but through God’s mercy they’ve led scores of people to the cross. More wonderful still, I’ve spoken words in ordinary conversation – mere chance sentences as some call them – which have taken flight as winged arrows from God and pierced men’s hearts and laid them wounded at Jesus’ feet. I often lift my hands in astonishment and ask, “How can God bless such a feeble instrument as me?”

Most who devote themselves to the blessed craft of fishing for men feel this way, and the desire they have for success is stirred by such a pure motive it could move an angel’s heart. Truly, it’s as pure as the motive which swayed the Savior when He endured the cross and despised the shame for the joy set before Him.

Satan asked, Does Job fear God for nothing? (Job 1:9). If he could have answered the question in the affirmative, if Satan could have proved the perfect and upright man found no reward in his holy living, then Job would have frivolously objected to the justice of God, and urged men to renounce service to Him as unprofitable. A reward is truly extended to the righteous, and in the lofty pursuits of grace, the rewards are of limitless value.

When we endeavor to lead men to God, we pursue a serious task far more profitable than the pearl fisher's diving or the diamond hunter's searching. No pursuit of mortal men is to be compared with that of soul winning. I know what I'm talking about when I tell you think of it like one serving the nation's cabinet or occupying a throne. It's a royal business, and those who follow it successfully are true kings.

Reward Lies in the Work

When it comes to the reward for godly service, with patience we wait for it (Romans 8:25). But we have promises of something to come of our wage, refreshing guarantees of what is laid up in heaven for us. Partly, this reward lies in the work itself . Men go hunting and shooting for the love of the sport. Surely, in an infinitely higher sphere, we can hunt for men's souls for the pleasing indulgence of our benevolence. To some of us, it would be an unbearable misery to see men descend to hell and to make no effort to see them saved. It is a reward to us to have a vent for our inward fires. On the other hand, it becomes an anguish and weariness for us to stop talking or taking part in those sacred activities which aim to pluck fire-brands from the flame. We feel deep sympathy with those we associate with, and, in a way, we feel their sin as our sin, their peril our peril.

> If another loses the way,
> My feet also go astray;
> If another downward go,
> In my heart is also woe.

Therefore, it's a relief to put forth the gospel and save ourselves from that sympathetic misery which echoes in our hearts with the crash of soul-ruin.

Soul Winning is a Beneficial Service

Soul winning is a service which brings great benefit to the individual who dedicates himself to it. The man who has watched for a soul, prayed for it, laid his plans for it, spoken with much trembling, and endeavored to make an impression, educates himself through the effort. He has experienced disappointment, cried out to God more earnestly, has tried again, has studied God's promise in order to meet the circumstances of the one convicted, and has turned to that point of the divine character which seems most likely to encourage trembling faith. While his desire is to benefit another, in every step of the process he has benefited himself. When he has gone over the old, old story of the cross with the weeping repentant soul and at last grips his hand knowing he could say, "I do believe, I will believe, that Jesus died for me." I say, he has received his own mental reward through the process.

It reminds him of his own lost origins and the struggles the Spirit used in bringing him to repentance. For him it brings to mind that precious moment when he first looked to Jesus and how it strengthened him with a firm confidence that Christ will save men. When we see Jesus save another and witness that marvelous transfiguration which passes over the face of the saved one, our own faith is greatly confirmed. Sceptics and modern-thinking men have little to do with converts. Those who labor for the conversion of souls believe in conversions. Those who see the processes of regeneration unfold see a miracle performed and are certain that "this is the finger of God." It is a most blessed exercise for a soul and brings about the greatest exalting of the heart to occupy yourself in seeking to bring another to the dear Redeemer's feet. If it ended there, you might thank God for even calling you to such a comforting, strengthening, elevating, and confirming work of service as that of converting others from their evil ways.

The Reward of Gratitude and Affection

Another precious reward is found in the gratitude and affection of those you bring to Christ. This is a priceless bonus − the blessedness of rejoicing in another's joy, the bliss of hearing you have led a soul to Jesus. Measure the sweetness of this reward by the bitterness of its opposite.

Men of God have brought many to Jesus, and all things have gone well in the church until declining years or changing fashions have thrown the good man into obscurity. Then the minister's own spiritual children have been eager to turn him out. The unkindest blow of all has come from those who owed their souls to him. It broke his heart, and he said with a sigh, "I could have borne it, except that the people I brought to the Savior are those who have turned against me." I admit, this pang is not unknown to me. I can never forget a certain household, in which the Lord gave me the great joy of bringing four employers and several of their employees to Jesus' feet. They were snatched from the extreme carelessness of worldliness. Before this, they had no knowledge of the grace of God, and so they joyfully confessed the faith. After a while, they swallowed certain opinions differing from ours. And from that moment, some of them spoke nothing but harsh words regarding me and my preaching. I did my best to teach them all the truth I knew, and if they found more truth than I had discovered, they might at least have remembered where they learned the basic elements of the faith. It is years ago now, and I have never even mentioned this before, but I still feel the wound left behind by this very much. The reason I mention these sharp jabs is to remind you by contrast how very sweet it is to have those around you whom you have brought to the Savior.

A mother feels great delight in her children, because an intense love comes with natural relationships. However, a still deeper love is connected with spiritual kinship, a love which lasts through life and continues in eternity. That's right, even in heaven each servant of the Lord will say, Behold I and the children which God has given me (Hebrews 2:13). They neither marry nor are given in marriage in the city of our God, but fatherhood and brotherhood in Christ shall still survive. Those sweet and blessed bonds which grace formed continue forever, and spiritual relationships are developed rather than dissolved after our translation to the better land. If you are eager for real joy, such as the type which you mull and sleep upon, I am persuaded that no joy of growing wealthy, increasing knowledge, influence over other people − no joy of any other sort can ever be compared with the elation of saving a soul from death and helping to restore the lost to our great Father's house. If you think ten thousand pounds a large reward, it is nothing at all. One can easily spend that amount, but no one can exhaust the inexpressible delights which come from the gratitude of souls converted from the error of their ways.

Richest Rewards

The richest reward lies in pleasing God, and causing the Redeemer to see the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isaiah 53:11) . It is worthy of the eternal Father that Jesus should have His reward, but it is marvelous that we should be employed by the Father to give to Christ that which He obtained through His agonies. This is a wonder of wonders. O my soul, this is an honor too great for you. A bliss too deep for words.

Let me ask you a question. What would you give to cause a thrill of pleasure in the heart of the beloved Redeemer? Remember the grief you cost Him and the pangs which shot through Him on your account, so He might deliver you from your sin and its consequences. Don't you long to make Him glad? When you bring others to His feet, you give Him joy. And it's no small joy either. I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:10). Isn't that a wonderful verse? But what does it mean? Does it mean the angels have joy?

Generally, that's how we read it, but it's not the intent of the verse. It says, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God . That means joy in the heart of God, around whose throne the

angels stand. It's a joy which angels delight to see, but what is it? Is the blessed God capable of greater joy than His own boundless happiness? What wondrous language this is. If it can't be increased, the endless bliss of God is more completely displayed. Can we be the instruments of this? Can we do anything which will make the Ever-blessed glad? Yes. We are told the great Father rejoices beyond measure when His prodigal son, who was dead, is alive again and the lost one is found.

If I could find the right words to say this as I ought to say it, it would make every Christian cry out, "Then I will labor to bring souls to the Savior!" It would make those of us who have brought many to Jesus in season and out of season, to bring more to Him instantly. It's a great pleasure to do a kindness to an earthly friend, but to do something specifically for Jesus, something more pleasing to Him than anything else in the world, is a great delight. If it's done with a right and proper motive, it is a good work to build a meetinghouse and dedicate it outright to the cause of God. But one living stone built upon the sure foundation, through our service as an instrument of God, gives the Master more pleasure than if we erected a vast pile of natural stones, which might do nothing more than overcrowd the ground.

With this is mind, go and seek to bring your children, your neighbors, your friends, and your kinsfolk to the Savior's feet, because nothing will give Him more pleasure than to see them turn to Him and live. By your love to Jesus, I implore you, become fishers of men.

Charles H. Spurgeon - A Brief Biography

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born on June 19, 1834, in Kelvedon, Essex, England. He was one of seventeen children in his family (nine of whom died in infancy). His father and grandfather were Nonconformist ministers in England. Due to economic difficulties, eighteen-month-old Charles was sent to live with his grandfather, who helped teach Charles the ways of God. Later in life, Charles remembered looking at the pictures in Pilgrim's Progres s and in Foxe's Book of Martyrs as a young boy.

Charles did not have much of a formal education and never went to college. He read much throughout his life though, especially books by Puritan authors.

Even with godly parents and grandparents, young Charles resisted giving in to God. It was not until he was fifteen years old that he was born again. He was on his way to his usual church, but when a heavy snowstorm prevented him from getting there, he turned in at a little Primitive Methodist chapel. Though there were only about fifteen people in attendance, the preacher spoke from Isaiah 45:22: Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Charles Spurgeon's eyes were opened and the Lord converted his soul.

He began attending a Baptist church and teaching Sunday school. He soon preached his first sermon, and then when he was sixteen years old, he became the pastor of a small Baptist church in Cambridge. The church soon grew to over four hundred people, and Charles Spurgeon, at the age of nineteen, moved on to become the pastor of the New Park Street Church in London. The church grew from a few hundred attenders to a few thousand. They built an addition to the church, but still needed more room to accommodate the congregation. The Metropolitan Tabernacle was built in London in 1861, seating more than 5,000 people. Pastor Spurgeon preached the simple message of the cross, and thereby attracted many people who wanted to hear God's Word preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

On January 9, 1856, Charles married Susannah Thompson. They had twin boys, Charles and Thomas. Charles and Susannah loved each other deeply, even amidst the difficulties and troubles that they faced in life, including health problems. They helped each other spiritually, and often together read the writings of Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, and other Puritan writers.

Charles Spurgeon was a friend of all Christians, but he stood firmly on the Scriptures, and it didn't please all who heard him. Spurgeon believed in and preached on the sovereignty of God, heaven and hell, repentance, revival, holiness, salvation through Jesus Christ alone, and the infallibility and necessity of the Word of God. He spoke against worldliness and hypocrisy among Christians, and against Roman Catholicism, ritualism, and modernism.

One of the biggest controversies in his life was known as the "Down-Grade Controversy." Charles Spurgeon believed that some pastors of his time were "down-grading" the faith by compromising with the world or the new ideas of the age. He said that some pastors were denying the inspiration of the Bible, salvation by faith alone, and the truth of the Bible in other areas, such as creation. Many pastors who believed what Spurgeon condemned were not happy about this, and Spurgeon eventually resigned from the Baptist Union.

Despite some difficulties, Spurgeon became known as the "Prince of Preachers." He opposed slavery, started a pastors' college, opened an orphanage, led in helping feed and clothe the poor, had a book fund for pastors who could not afford books, and more.

Charles Spurgeon remains one of the most published preachers in history. His sermons

were printed each week (even in the newspapers), and then the sermons for the year were re-issued as a book at the end of the year. The first six volumes, from 1855-1860, are known as The Park Street Pulpit , while the next fifty-seven volumes, from 1861-1917 (his sermons continued to be published long after his death), are known as The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit . He also oversaw a monthly magazine-type publication called The Sword and the Trowel, and Spurgeon wrote many books, including Lectures to My Students , All of Grace , Around the Wicket Gate , Advice for Seekers , John Ploughman's Talks , The Soul Winner , Words of Counsel for Christian Workers , Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith , Morning and Evening , his autobiography, and more, including some commentaries, such as his twenty-year study on the Psalms – The Treasury of David .

Charles Spurgeon often preached ten times a week, preaching to an estimated ten million people during his lifetime. He usually preached from only one page of notes, and often from just an outline. He read about six books each week. During his lifetime, he had read The Pilgrim's Progress through more than one hundred times. When he died, his personal library consisted of more than 12,000 books. However, the Bible always remained the most important book to him.

Spurgeon was able to do what he did in the power of God's Holy Spirit because he followed his own advice – he met with God every morning before meeting with others, and he continued in communion with God throughout the day.

Charles Spurgeon suffered from gout, rheumatism, and some depression, among other health problems. He often went to Menton, France, to recuperate and rest. He preached his final sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on June 7, 1891, and died in France on January 31, 1892, at the age of fifty-seven. He was buried in Norwood Cemetery in London.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon lived a life devoted to God. His sermons and writings continue to influence Christians all over the world.