



You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

SOUL SAVING PREACHING

By Thomas Cook

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PREFACE

This booklet contains the substance of three or four addresses given at different times to Cliff College Students on the subject of “Soul-saving Preaching.” It is not a treatise on Homiletics, but a plain statement of what I learned by observation and experience during the more than twenty years when I was engaged in evangelistic work. It embodies maxims which have slowly formulated themselves, the result of many testings, and which have been proved again and again to work successfully.

Neither piety nor learning can take the place of knowing how to pull in the net, and young preachers need instruction in this more than in any other. Socialists (pre-1917) are alive to the importance of instructing their propagandists in principles, facts, and arguments, and we must lay ourselves out to help our men to secure the necessary equipment for work so momentous as the saving of souls.

When many who heard these addresses expressed gratitude for help they had received, it occurred to me that if they were published in book form many might be helped to increased usefulness who could not avail themselves of the benefits of the College.

The future of Methodism must depend more and more on the effectiveness of those who fill the pulpit, and as five out of seven of our pulpits are supplied by local preachers every Sunday, we can do no greater service to our Church than to increase the effectiveness of these unpaid workers. If to be wise to win souls is the wisdom preachers should possess, this booklet is issued to help them to secure that wisdom, with the earnest prayer that the supply of the Spirit may sanctify the teaching and anoint every reader for the service of the Lord.

Thomas Cook



1. THE EVANGELISTIC GIFT

Men called of God to preach should have some measure of success in the work to which

they have been appointed. The old rule “gifts, grace and fruit,” must never be departed from. A farmer always planting and never reaping; a lawyer always pleading, but never gaining a verdict; a physician always prescribing but never healing – these men would soon know they had mistaken their calling. And if nothing but barrenness marks a preacher's course, there must be something wrong. The number of those won for Christ may be greater or less, but some should be won and others helped and blessed. Men sent of God will go about their work in such a spirit that some will bow before their force. Results will vary with different temperaments and constitutions, but there must be results if we are to make full proof of our ministry.

At the same time we need to guard against the common mistake of inferring great grace from great apparent usefulness. Men with little grace, and some with none at all have been very successful in winning souls for Christ, while holy men in most intimate communion with God have toiled on for years in apparently unsuccessful effort. We say apparently, because the whole chain of sequence is badly tangled, and it is impossible to trace the invisible footsteps of each man's influence. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. To some men who do not possess in great measure the soul-converting power, God has given another kind of effectiveness; they are gifted more largely in the direction of a well-balanced intellect, and are better adapted to instruct and edify believers than to bring men to decision for Christ. It is quite as important a work to keep men in the love of Christ as to bring them to Christ. The real power of a Church may decline under a revival preacher. He may be repeating the folly of the priest who undermined the Temple in his eagerness to get coal to keep the altar fires burning.

God has varieties of work and different agencies. There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit.” A plough is not a reaping hook, and some men do the ploughing so well that God seldom sends them to reap. Spheres of work differ as much as the capacities of men to fill them.” When He ascended on high ... He gave gifts unto men.” Explaining this Scripture Mr. Jowett, in his *Passion for Souls*, says, “He dropped one gift here, and a common-place man became a pastor. He dropped another gift there, and the undistinguished became a prophet. He dropped a third gift yonder, and an impotent man became a powerful evangelist.” What our particular gift shall be is decided by One Who makes no mistakes. He divideth “to every man severally as He will.” To possess the evangelistic gift is a position of exceptional honour and peril. Dr. Dale says, “Such men should be strengthened and sustained by the constant intercessions of the Church.”

Our theory of spiritual dynamics is this: The Holy Ghost sheds love abroad in the believer's heart, and love is power. This power is always effective to conquer sin and in its highest degrees to overcome sin. But its effect upon others is modified by our temperament and constitution. Peter was chosen as a preacher on the day of Pentecost, not by chance, but by Divine purpose, because he was the best medium through which the Holy Spirit could work. None of the other apostles could have been substituted with the same results. Thomas had feeble grasp of truth, smaller spiritual caliber and inferior personal magnetism. Philip had a materialistic turn of mind, and John had a contemplative and subjective cast, but Peter had quick and generous impulses, his sensitive nature gave him a magnetic power and persuasive influence which no other Apostle possessed in the same degree, and these constitutional endowments had much to do with his success.

It is not derogatory to the Creator to say that He endows some men with a certain magnetic power for this very purpose, not that it may be turned to selfish or Satanic uses, but that it may be strengthened by the Holy Ghost and used as a spiritual force to push forward the interests of Christ's Kingdom.

But though spiritual gifts are all Christ-born and Christ-given, all such gifts may be

enriched by our own alertness. Many possess the soul-saving gift who have not developed it. The incipient capacity may be enlarged by our own intelligent observation and experience. Causes produce effects; means conduce to ends. Soul-saving is not a mechanical process, but there are helps and there are hindrances. Even supernatural power does not disregard natural law. We must recognize the fact that God works always along the line of human cooperation. To those whom He calls to become fishers of men He gives the initial gift, but the gift needs to be cultivated. To win men for Christ there is required, in addition to personal consecration, tact, adaptation, knowledge of human nature, a forcible and direct manner of appeal, and much else that is human. The art needs to be studied like any other science, if we wish to become increasingly effective.

“Sermons like to win souls” was the subject of one of Spurgeon's most telling addresses to his students. He recognized, of course, that the Holy Spirit alone could do the work, “but,” he said, “the principle of adaptation runs through the whole of His work. There are certain Scriptures which are better than others to bring before the minds of the unconverted, and if this be true about your texts, how much more is it so in your discourses.”

Dr. Alexander Whyte has told us how he made a patient and laborious study of John Wesley's Journals for the purpose of classifying all the texts upon which that great preacher built his evangel. We can learn much from studying the ways and means of those who have been instrumental in winning multitudes for the Lord. Practical trial of methods and measures is essential to true effectiveness. For this reason the preacher gets the best training for his work in his work.



2. DEFINITENESS OF AIM

Henry Ward Beecher tells us that he delivered hundreds of sermons before he conceived the real design of preaching. For a long time, it seems, preaching with him was an end, but when he received the baptism of Fire he saw that it was only a means to an end. “Then,” he says, “it appeared a definite, practical thing. Preaching was a method of enforcing truths, not for the sake of the truths themselves, but for the result to be sought in men. A sermon was good that had power on the heart; and was good for nothing – no matter how good – that had no moral power on man.”

Wesley said to his preachers, “It is not your business to preach so many sermons merely, or to take care of this or that Society, but to save as many souls as you can, to bring as many sinners as you can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.”

In Dr. Adam Clarke's "Letter to a Preacher", he says, “*You preach not merely to explain God's Word, but to save souls. Whenever you forget this, you go astray!*” A sermon is only a tool valuable for the work it does. A sword may be bound with ribbons – it is none the worse for being beautiful – but in the day of battle its sharp edge is most important.

Wesley's sermons do not compare in sublimity and style with those of Hall and Chalmers, but he hits the mark every time, and does not waste an ounce of powder in fireworks. In pulpit oratory there are three elements, either of which may control: the text, the object or theme, and the object or end aimed at. If the text rule, the result is an exposition or exegesis; if the subject, an essay or discourse; if the object to be attained be steadily kept

in view, and control the disposition of the parts and the expression, we get properly a sermon.

A sermon is a speech having a definite aim, a result in the convictions, affections, resolutions and conduct of the hearer. Preachers are effective, other things being equal, in proportion to the clarity of their purpose, and the definiteness of their aim. A man without a goal seldom gets anywhere; as Whately says, "He aims at nothing and hits it." An indefinite sermon is as effective as a shooting range without a target. No question should be oftener on a preacher's lips than, "To what purpose is this sermon?" and "Is it likely to accomplish that result?"

My constant advice to our students is: "Always aim at effect. Let all you say lead you nearer to the proposed mark. If you have no mark you had better go to some other work for which the Lord has fitted you." It is sometimes a good plan to tell the people frankly at the beginning what the sermon aims to do, and at the conclusion, review by condensing into a few striking sentences the gist of all you have tried to say.

Chalmers was quite a dull and ineffective preacher until, on his sick-bed at Kilmany, he became aware, to use his own words, of two new dimensions – the littleness of time, and the greatness of eternity. His preaching was not aimless after that: he had a special object in every sermon which was followed by wonderful success.

All preachers have to choose what note shall be dominant in their preaching. It was in his first Circuit Hugh Price Hughes decided that he would make the salvation of souls the chief business of his life. "I was called upon to decide," he says, "whether I would follow my literary ambitions or seek the salvation of souls; but I had tasted a new joy, and I chose the saving of men. It was like turning a switch on a railway. It seemed to be only a little thing, but it sent me on the evangelistic line, and I have been running on it ever since."

At Madeley the very worldlings said of Fletcher, "There goes the soul-saver." There was the same directness of purpose in the life of Thomas Collins. He had no desire to be considered a many-sided man. He made no pretensions to that breadth of thought, of which today is so fond. The keynote of his life was struck in some of his own sentences: "God loves Methodism much, but He loves souls more. The solemn one thing of my life shall be to save souls. Desire for souls swallows me up." A scholar and a gentleman who was among his occasional hearers said, "All your discourses seem to be about me. None other, that ever I hear, get inside me as yours do." The sermons preached by Thomas Collins were always intended to bring about immediate results. One of his favorite illustrations was, "Going home without a prayer-meeting after the sermon is like a sportsman who has shot at the birds but not stopped to bag the game."

This aim at direct results is the secret of one half the success of Methodism; it is the explanation of most of our history. The careful study of the preachers who have wielded most spiritual power shows that they were actuated and thrilled by this great purpose, and that this made ordinary talents extraordinary and converted weakness itself into strength. All experience proves that successful men owe more to energetic purpose than to great faculties. If we are to have a new era of power in preaching, we must have a more definite result, towards which all else moves. The salvation of souls must be the golden milestone to which all roads lead.

Men who decide to live for this must be prepared to sacrifice everything that would interfere with the accomplishment of their purpose. They must prepare their sermons with the needs of the people in mind, and be willing to sacrifice personal tastes, literary ambitions, favorite lines of study, and make themselves of no reputation that by "all means they may save some." Successful anglers know that Mark Guy Pearse's rule,

“Keep yourself out of sight,” must be observed if fish are to be caught, and to win souls for Christ the suppression and eclipse of self are equally necessary. We must consider what truths are most appropriate to the current need, and not what will bring us most credit.

The people must leave our services saying not “What a preacher,” but “What a Saviour!” None but those who have a settled, unconquerable purpose will succeed in leading men to Christ. A feeble resolution will soon be overcome. Souls were never more difficult to win than now, but difficulties give way before determined men. Those who think they are going to secure great victories at small cost are greatly mistaken. Sin was never more aggressive. It has boldness, skill, and resources such as it never had before. Soul-saving means “labour” of body and brain, such as only men who are possessed by an all-engrossing purpose will attempt.

Brainerd had such burning earnestness that he said, “I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep I dreamed of these things, and when I was awake the first thing I thought of was this great work.” No wonder he was successful in saving souls from death. If we felt as he did we should not preach in vain. “Give me men of David Brainerd's spirit,” said Wesley, “and nothing can stand before them.”

If we knew the present joy and future glory of those who turn many to righteousness, we should be altogether given up to labour for the salvation of the souls of men, which is the only work that angels envy.



3. WHAT TO PREACH

Preach the Word. All successful preachers deal largely in the true sayings of God. Wesley's sermons were simply solid Scripture utterances. Of Chalmers it has been said that his sermons “held the Bible in solution.” A peculiar energy always attends the Divine Word; it is “quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.” The Word of God is the chosen instrument of the Holy Spirit in the great work of soul-saving, especially the great truths of that Word which circle round the crucified and risen Christ.

The subject-matter of Paul's preaching was “Christ crucified.” The very heart and essence of Peter's preaching is found in the words, “Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead.” This is the central theme of all true preaching, the truth around which crystallizes the science of salvation.

To preach the Gospel is to turn the eyes of men to the Cross as the only means of salvation. Even John the Baptist was content to be only a voice, crying, “Behold the Lamb of God.” The Master Himself has left us our first and last lesson in homiletics: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” Much of the present-day preaching fails to reach, touch, and move men because the fact is not recognized that “the Cross is the medicine of God for all the wants and woes of men,” and the very heart of the Gospel is the doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice, “He, His Own Self, bare our sins in His Own Body on the tree.” We must preach substitution straightforwardly and unmistakably if we mean to convert sinners *and lead men through repentance and faith to holiness.*

To this all other means and methods must be tributary and subsidiary. Spurgeon says,

“This is the great net of the Gospel fisherman: the fish are drawn and driven in the right direction by other truths, but this is the net itself.”

Dr. Ryland used to say to his students: “No sermon is of any value or likely to be useful that has not the three R's in it – Ruin by the Fall, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit.” Our sermons may not be able to contain all God's truth concerning these doctrines, but it is an undeniable fact that the reiteration of these great truths by Wesley and Whitefield was one of the great features of the Methodist revival of the eighteenth century, which wrought such wonders in the work of soul-saving. The lost condition of the soul by nature, repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, justification, sanctification the witness of the Spirit – these were the great themes of the early Methodist preachers, and they are still essential to mighty, triumphant Evangelism.

Some teach that emphasis should be placed upon Christ and salvation, because they think that to be the shortest and surest way of making a sinner feel the reality and heinousness of sin. We think that emphasis should be placed in the first instance on sin and its penalty, that men may be brought to realize their need of salvation. What we think of the Atonement depends greatly upon what we think of that which made the Atonement necessary. The man who has felt his guilt most deeply and realized most keenly his exposure to the pangs of the “second death,” always appreciates most the value of Christ's infinite sacrifice. Unless the law is preached men do not see their need of a Saviour, nor will they value as they should do Christ's great work. “Preach the law for conviction,” says quaint John Berridge, “use its carving knife. Moses will lend you a grindstone to sharpen it on.... When sinners cry out for mercy, bring out your Christ. He will be acceptable then.”

Our business is to obey the Divine injunction, “Show MY people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.” There is danger in these days of toning down the meaning of the word until it means something less altogether than what the Bible teaches, and what God means by sin. Some regard it as a sort of pardonable naughtiness for which men are to be pitied rather than blamed, the result of weakness rather than wickedness, but the Bible teaching is very different. Sin is lawlessness.

It is setting up our will against God's will. Sin defies law because it is law; resists restraint because it is restraint; contests authority with God because He is God. Says Cain, as depicted by Lord Byron, in his conversation with Lucifer, “I bend to neither God nor thee.” Lord Byron knew whereof he affirmed. That is the spirit of sin. It is rebellion against God. It sets Him at defiance, spurns His authority, and treats His government with contempt. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is set forth as “the abominable thing which God hateth.” Our duty is to teach its exceeding sinfulness, and the certainty that every transgression will be punished.

Where there is decay of conviction concerning law and penalty there is always corresponding weakness concerning other doctrines. Maudlin sentiment and laxity in reference to future punishment have produced much of our modern indifference to the claims of religion and authority. It is because the pulpit has hesitated to declare the danger that people have hesitated to believe in it. It may not be popular to teach that God will punish sin, but the Book says He will, and we must not hesitate to declare it. There has crept into our pulpits *a sort of rose-water theology* which excludes all the sterner truths. John Bunyan bids us to beware of Mr. Clip-Scriptures, and the warning was never more needed than it is today.

On these subjects we must have convictions, or our preaching will become careful and timid without moral earnestness and without power. Our hearers intuitively perceive

whether or not we believe what we preach. Souls are not saved by “ifs” and “hows” and “buts” and “whys.” We must speak as the Master did “with authority.” Take away the honest, hearty belief that without Christ souls are irretrievably and eternally lost, and you have broken the mainspring of evangelistic activity.

Practical indifference always follows loss of vitality in evangelical faith. We rob the Gospel of half its power if we leave out its threatenings of punishment. The sterner truths should have the same prominence in our sermons as they had in the Master's discourses. If we keep to the language of Scripture, we shall not go astray. It may be necessary to use different phraseology from that used by our fathers, but the great truths held and taught by them, concerning the last judgment and its issues, we must teach emphatically as they did, or one of the great means of conversion will be left unused. We must not only show men their danger, but warn them to escape from the wrath to come.

“With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the gaping grave.”

This done, we must return to invitation and set before awakened sinners the rich provisions of infinite grace which are freely offered in the Gospel. No message should end in denunciation. Sin and salvation should always be proclaimed in one and the same breath. Christ must be set forth as able and willing to save to the uttermost. If we preach “a present free and full salvation” sin-stricken hearts will be inspired with hope and gladness, and be led into the joy of conscious salvation.

These are the truths which give strength and success to the Evangelist's message, and they should be the staple of our teaching.



4. PULPIT PREPARATION

No greater mistake can be made by a young preacher than to think because God cares nothing for human eloquence and learning, he is justified in bringing thin, hackneyed, threadbare repetitions into the pulpit. No man should offer to God or man what costs him nothing. Effective preachers speak out of a full understanding as well as a full heart. Exhortations, entreaties, beseechings, if not accompanied by sound instruction, are like firing off powder without shot.

Drummond once stated that “the crime of Evangelism is laziness, and that the failure of the average Mission Church to reach intelligent working men rises from the indolent reiteration of threadbare formulae by teachers, who have not learned to respect their hearers.” It is to be feared that in this remark there was much truth. Working men understand and appreciate the best and noblest thoughts we can give them, and will not be put off with commonplaces. To secure their confidence and respect we must be master of what we assume to teach. They know instinctively whether or not we understand what we are talking about, and despise a man who goes into the pulpit and talks twaddle on the momentous themes with which we have to deal. The preacher who is acceptable to the people respects his hearers and labours to the utmost to make himself worthy of them. Preachers need to feel that no task is greater than theirs, and that no task demands more enthusiasm and sacrifice.

John Bright was not born an orator, but took infinite pains to acquire that matchless style which gave him power to sway vast multitudes at will. When preachers are willing to take

similar pains to acquire competency to proclaim their message, they will talk in such a manner that men will be compelled to listen. To win souls for Christ we must not only have something to say, but we must learn how to say it. When Charles Kingsley sat in Plymouth Church listening to Henry Ward Beecher, he wept like a child and said, "All my life I have meant to say these things, but I have never been able to say them as this man says them." We must study more and more how to convey the deepest truths in the most clear and attractive forms. Arguments from history, illustrations from nature, maxims from philosophy, and examples from life may all help to increase the effectiveness of our ministry by making it instructive and interesting. Each listener has reason, imagination, conscience, and will, in varying proportions, and we must appeal to them all. He who has the greatest variety of baits will catch the most fish, and of the most kinds.

In preparing our sermons the spiritual needs of our hearers must always be the first and chiefest consideration. What the people need most (not the speaker's inclinations) must determine the style and structure of our sermons. It is not possible in this article to describe at any length the whole process of preparation for the pulpit, but a few general rules may be helpful. After selecting the text, the context should be carefully examined, and all parallel passages. Then the meaning of the words it contains should be considered, so as to clearly understand its primary teaching. The mind should next be filled with ideas on the subject, gathered from all quarters by reading and observation. When this has been done let the law of the "association of ideas" do their work. As you keep turning the text over in your mind, faces in the street and the whole panorama of daily life will suggest illustrations, arguments, and side thoughts, until there is material enough and to spare.

We recommend all young preachers to use the pen freely in their pulpit preparations, but, if the whole sermon be written, to be careful to avoid becoming memo-writers, preaching their ideas always in the same words and phrases. Preachers should never allow themselves to be so tied down to any subject or arrangement as not to be able to seize and use any incident or theme suggested at the moment which would engage the attention and affect the heart better than their carefully-prepared phrasing.

Writing tends to exactness in expression and composition; it enlarges the vocabulary and gives opportunity for weighing our thoughts, so that we are not carried away by mere impulse and feeling. It teaches us how to discriminate, and helps the whole constructive faculty. It enables the preacher to see through the entire perspective of his discourse, and reveals whether or not the different propositions are connected by leading and well related thoughts. Such preparation inspires the confidence and self-possession which are essential to effective speech.

But while we should, as far as practicable, make the most thorough preparation in the substance and arrangement of our sermons, we should trust for utterance to help from above, and not become slaves to either manuscript or memory. If our minds are full of ideas on our subject. And our hearts inspired with its spirit, we shall use spontaneously the language which is most appropriate to the occasion.

Extemporaneous speech may not be as precise as the pen would afford, but it enables us to express conviction, emotion, experience, and sympathy as no studied composition can do. Our people love a ministry that is natural and spontaneous, and care more for brotherliness, humanness, and familiar speech than for precision and polish. We must speak to them face to face as a man speaketh to his friend, and pour out our hearts before them.

We do not say that God will never bless the ministrations of the man who reads from a manuscript, but we do say that that is not Scriptural preaching. Methodism was never created by a paper ministry, and it will never be sustained by such a ministry. We agree

with the Rev. W. L. Watkinson, who once said, “A read sermon is a funeral sermon in a Methodist Church.” The first Methodist preachers never could have awakened the slumbering Churches and aroused the masses of the people to religious concern with such elegant and powerless essays as some of their professed followers are now accustomed to deliver.

Reading literary essays will not save souls. We must preach as we talk, in ordinary newspaper English. Educated people are not deceived by learned verbiage. They regard an inflated and lofty style as an evidence of ignorance rather than culture. The first essential of effective preaching is that every man should hear the Gospel in his own language. No souls have ever been saved or purified, or can be, where this condition is lacking.



5. SIMPLE AND INTERESTING

Hundreds of good men are failing in the pulpit today because they weigh their sermons down with technical and abstract terms which the people do not understand. The advice of Charles Lamb to Coleridge, “cultivate simplicity,” is almost as important for the preacher as that he should give heed to any statement in the Sermon on the Mount. John Bright and Canon Liddon always assumed that they had to explain everything. Bookish words which are not familiar to the average member of the congregation ought always to be avoided.

It is matter for serious consideration how much of what is said in the pulpit is really understood by the people. A well known minister was once preaching a Sunday School sermon and took for his text, “Ye are God's husbandry.” He enlarged on the different kinds of seed and soil, and thought he was making everything plain to both old and young. Afterwards he heard that one of the scholars was asked at home what the sermon was about, and the reply was that she was not quite sure but thought it had something to do with getting married. It had never occurred to him to explain such a simple Saxon word as husbandry. (!!! typical!!) The first thing that a preacher must demand of himself is that he shall be understood.

Let those who imagine that deep thought and big words must go together read the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. No profounder piece of composition was ever written, and most of it is in monosyllables. We are of the same mind as Joshua Shute who said, “That sermon has most learning in it that has most plainness.” Hence it is that a great scholar was wont to say, “Lord, give me learning enough that I may preach plain enough.” Dr. Robert Reynolds, whose life some of us have read with profit and interest, writes thus in one of his letters, “To preach to these working classes in a straightforward honest way without exactly calling it preaching – to translate into their lingo the glorious thought of Paul, is what we want.”

Learning is good so far as it helps us to communicate thought and feeling, but it becomes a peril and a snare if it produces a form of speech which is not understood by the common people. Our aim should be as Bishop Simpson says: “That the poorest old woman, sitting in the comer, may understand.” Even our educated people enjoy an earnest spontaneous delivery, and prefer sermons that abound in “words which the heart knows” instead of those full of high-sounding phrases, and technical expressions. Dr. Franklin said he would go twenty miles at any time to hear Whitefield. If we would win for the truth an entrance to the hearts of the people, we must learn to be familiar and natural, and to be free as the

occasion may require.

Good taste is always called for in preaching, but there is no special sacredness in the frigid vocabulary of the latest literary and scientific school, and much less in an affectation of learning which does not exist. Sermons are most popular when the people feel the reality of the preacher, and when he possesses that "brotherly access" which is willing to forego everything that he may win them for Christ. To a courtly preacher who complained of lack of success Daniel Burgess quaintly said: "Thank your velvet mouth for that! Too fine to use market language." Plain, straight-forward, simple speech is the inmost secret of evangelistic success; for it not only evangelizes the hearer, but makes every preacher an evangelist. "Too colloquial" was one of the objections to my trial sermon; but Jesus Christ and common sense were on my side, and subsequent events have justified the method.

"He to whom the world's heart warms
Must speak in wholesome, home-bred words."

By plainness of speech we do not mean that which is low and trivial; much less what is vulgar and coarse. Soul-saving preaching invites and consecrates every grace and art of which we are capable, and in no other work does human skill or genius of any kind find such sublime inspiration and such lofty exercise; but unless we are understood, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Martin Luther wrote to a young preacher, "All your sermons should be of the simplest," and all successful preachers have acted on that advice.

Rather than fail to be interesting we should ransack heaven and earth, and make all business, all experience, all literature tend to the illustration and effect of our message. "Give them something worth listening to," was Spurgeon's first advice to his students, and we know of no method more sure to gain the ear and the heart. We need to deal constantly with the same truths, but they should always be expressed in language which gives new splendor to familiar ideas. Love must always say the same things, but it never repeats itself. People are weary of "the fatiguing moralities, gravities, and ponderosities of the regulation sermon." We must say something that nobody else would say, and what is worth walking a dozen miles to hear.

General Grant was indifferent to long and labored editorials of Opposition papers, but he said he hated to be stung by keen paragraphs. It is the hissing bullet of the sharpshooter that brings the sinner to his knees. "Californian" Taylor has forcibly expressed this idea in his chapter on "Surprise Power." We must take the people unawares. They must be surprised into thought by something we say which they did not expect.

The head, the heart, and the imagination must all be appealed to. The Master never spoke without a parable. Some preachers rush to the other extreme and never tell a story lest they should be designated "anecdotal." But who, since the days of our Lord, has been listened to with more delight than that charming story-teller, Dr. Guthrie, and who in Methodism was heard more gladly than Samuel Coley? Man is possessed of a threefold nature: reason, affection, and imagination. By awakening and gratifying the imagination, the truth finds its way more readily to the heart and makes a deeper impression on the memory. Like a float, a good illustration keeps what we are saying from sinking; like a nail, it fastens it on the mind; like the feathers of an arrow, it makes it strike, and, like a barb, it makes it stick. Thomas Fuller says: "Reasons are the pillars of the fabric, but examples are the windows which give the best lights."

But while similes, metaphors, allegories, and anecdotes are excellent and indispensable to successful preaching, we must be careful not to overwhelm the truth by excessive use of illustrations. Real instruction must be given and solid doctrine taught, or our imagery will

pall upon our hearers. An illustration is but a window, but of what use is the light which it admits if you have nothing for the light to reveal? It is possible to give the impression that the truth is introduced to display the illustration, rather than the illustration to enforce the truth. The best illustrations are drawn from familiar life, allusions to passing events, and especially from personal experience. How often, when the rest of the discourse has apparently failed to impress, have we seen the people melt with emotion as we have told the simple story of our own conversion! It was the habit of the early Methodist preachers to give experimental illustrations from their own personal history. Such references never failed to kindle their own religious feelings and to spread a sympathetic emotion through their congregations. We cannot improve upon this mode of illustrating the truths we are sent to proclaim.

To men with experience of Divine things the aptest illustrations will spontaneously present themselves.

What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell,
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible.”



6. NATURALNESS

There is one element in all powerful preaching to which criticism has given no name. Hearers do not know what it is, but it is something individual and peculiar to the man. When Senator Evarts was asked to explain John Hall's popularity and power, his answer was “Personality.” For want of a better word we use that term to describe this subtle quality which we all understand but cannot define.

Phillips Brooks defines preaching as “truth through personality.” Another prominent preacher says, “A service is a prayer, a chapter, a hymn, and a sermon – plus the preacher.” We once heard Dr. Parker say at the close of one of his noonday services, “You can buy a printed copy of the sermon I have preached this morning, at the door, for one penny.” Then he paused a moment, and said, in his own inimitable manner, “But you cannot buy the man who has preached.” We all know what he meant: the personality of the preacher cannot be put into print. No man can trace the secret of Whitefield's power by reading his sermons. The least part of his sermons was that which can be put into words and phrases. The subtle spiritual forces of personality and magnetism cannot be weighed and measured as physical forces may. His words were impregnated with the Christian personality of the man, with what Whitefield himself called “soul-life.”

The Gospel preached by Paul, Wesley, and Spurgeon was the same Gospel, and yet not the same. It was the same Gospel, plus each man's distinctive personality. Peter stood out from the other apostles in the bold prominence of his peculiar characteristics, but he was not duplicated by any of the others. John was himself, and so was Paul; their work and mission differed as much as their gifts.

Each was the center of a circle of influence where none could be so great and useful as himself. The same is true of every preacher. Each man's work differs from all others in its special features, and none can do it as well as he can. “Christ in you,” is a much deeper phrase than most men realize. The truth concerning Christ exists according to our experience of it as a living thing. The truth that is in a man is the word which he preaches.

In this sense every true preacher is able to speak of God's message as "my Gospel." Each man presents it in the manner most natural to his individuality, and nothing is more important than that he should be true to himself. The thoughts of the mind, the emotions of the soul, the intonations of the voice, should all express such distinctive personality, that people will say what Jeffrey, the Editor of the Edinburgh Review, said the first time he heard Dr. Chalmers: "I do not know what it is, but there is something altogether remarkable about that man."

We plead for naturalness in opposition to affectation, monotonous sameness, and stiff formality. It is difficult to decide which is the worse evil – an oily, sanctimonious whine or the habit of monotony. Both are veritable dragons which must be warred against and slain. Betterton, the actor, said that the players would empty the play-house if they spake like the preachers: that while "actors speak of things imaginary as though real, preachers speak of things real as though imaginary." The actor has no thoughts and feelings of his own. He familiarizes himself with the thoughts of others through their words, and imitates the expression of their feelings through his actions. His aim is to speak and act just as they are supposed to be spoken and acted. But the preacher gives expression to his own words and his own feelings. He has simply to be true to himself. If his mind be full of his subject, and he feels his deep responsibility, his heart will furnish him with the most natural tone of voice, the most proper language, and the most suitable and graceful gestures. If he deals with eternal issues there will not only be energetic pathos of diction and countenance, but his whole body, mind, and soul will enter actively into his sermon.

Some teachers on Homiletics would drill us in modes of address, and tell us how to give "the tender.... the indignant," "the consoling," and even "the abrupt"; but the only safe rule is to be natural, to speak out what we think and feel. Instead of trying to make gestures we should trust to spontaneous impulse. Those only are natural which come of themselves. Even a child becomes constrained as soon as it is aware of being observed, and preachers cannot attain to full self-possession without thorough denial of self-interest. We must lose sight of ourselves by becoming entirely absorbed in our theme. We do not say that there is nothing to learn from the art of the speaking, but it should be rather to correct defects and unlearn bad habits than by any set of rules to make all men speak and gesticulate to order.

The human voice possesses a wonderful range and variety of tone, adapted to all the variety of the heart's emotions. Every variety of thought and feeling has its appropriate tone, from the soft whisper of secret confidence to the shriek of wild despair. The voice should always be in harmony with the subject, and should indicate the earnest love, the deep sympathy, and ardent zeal of the preacher.

The ease and clarity with which one can be heard depend as much upon distinctness and emphasis of pronunciation as upon volume of voice. Each syllable should be pronounced distinctly; not in a slow, measured, monotonous manner, but with the ease and naturalness of familiar conversation. Emphasis should be clear and emphatic, but let it be remembered that a picture all shade or all light is no picture at all. In this matter preachers should not so much strive to be natural, as guard against being unnatural.

Whitefield was greatly indebted to his magnificent voice and the way in which he used its natural tones. Garrick once said he would give a hundred guineas to be able to say "Oh" as Whitefield did, and by merely varying his pronunciation of the word "Mesopotamia" he could make an audience tremble or weep. His voice was undoubtedly a great gift, but his management of it made it the perfect instrument it afterwards became. It had wonderful richness and sweetness, but behind the voice was the man. His power lay deeper than articulation and enunciation; it was the result of his passionate earnestness to save men. Being moved himself, he made others feel; it was the play of moral and

spiritual forces. He threw himself into his speaking, and this gave to his look, speech, attitude, and action an influence that was powerful upon the hearts of his hearers.



7. EARNESTNESS

“If I were asked,” says Spurgeon, “what in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success in winning souls for Christ, I should reply, 'Earnestness'; and if I were asked a second or a third time I should not vary the answer, for personal observation drives me to the conclusion that, as a rule, real success is proportionate to the preacher's earnestness.”

At a recent Southport Convention, in an address to ministers, Dr. Campbell Morgan laid down the dictum, “Indifference in the world is largely the result of passionlessness in the pulpit,” and a few years ago the Editor of the British Weekly attributed the lack of pulpit effectiveness to a decay of passion. It is a thankless task to join in the too common wail concerning the character of the modern pulpit, but truth demands the admission that much of our present-day preaching is missing fire, for the very sufficient reason that our souls lack the holy passion which characterized the preaching of the early Methodists.

There is an undercurrent of suspicion abroad that much of the preaching of today is but a make-believe, and that suspicion is due to the formal, lifeless manner in which the duties of the preacher are too often performed. How can a man really believe in the great, solemn, eternal verities that he preaches without being thrilled with intense emotion to the very core of his being? Who can tell how much such a reflection as this has to do with the prevailing alienation of so many of the people from our Churches?

The picture suggested by the word “preacher” is that of a man with a horn to his lips, through which he proclaims the message from the King which means life or death to those who hear it. To a man who believes that God has called him to be His spokesman – to publish the command on which hangs the eternal destiny of those who are reached by the sound of his voice – how is it possible to preach with unquivering nerve and unquicken heart-beat? His soul should glow and quiver under the tremendous burden of his message, until, like an irrepressible fire or flood, it must have vent somewhere. His sermons should not only be instinct with life, possessing “the thought that breathes, the word that burns,” they should be the crystallization of thoughts and feelings surging at the white-heat of a God-inspired intensity.

The preacher has more to do than to furnish the mind with facts. He has to appeal to the conscience, to touch the heart, to capture the will, and change the whole course of life. Simulated passion will never accomplish this. Even the dullest hearer can detect the difference between that which is assumed and that which is real. It is only the glow of a heart on fire, in touch with the heart of the living God, that can quicken dead souls into newness of life. The earnestness we need is that which results from the Spirit of God so permeating the whole man in every thought, word, and expression, that he is able to transmit his own keen, vivid sense of the reality of Divine and eternal things to his hearers, and win them for God.

Dread emotion as we may, it remains a fact that the will is never stirred to action until one or other of the emotions is kindled. Few can follow an abstruse argument, but all can feel. It is not enough to inculcate truth upon the intellect; the preacher must sway the

sensibilities which lie nearest to the will. It is greater to move a man than to teach him. A candle may illuminate an ironstone rock, but only a furnace can melt it. An unregenerate intellect, well read in theology and trained in rhetoric, may preach a popular sermon, but only the soul aglow with the live coal from off the altar can arouse the conscience and change the current of the human will. Passion stirs passion, emotion kindles emotion, and only men who are at white-heat make any deep and lasting impression. "I ought" may be the dictate of reason, but "I must" is the cry of strong emotion, and the will obeys the latter rather than the former.

The history of preaching is trumpet-tongued in proclaiming passion as the quality most essential to success. In all ages the successful preachers have been men whose souls were moved with a sense of the tremendous import of their commission, and their burning hearts soon found for themselves flaming tongues which passionately proclaimed the claims of God upon the human race. The passion of the preachers on the Day of Pentecost has passed into a proverb. The passion of Paul throbs and bums in every chapter of his marvelous career. The record of the early Methodist preachers is one of enviable triumph, but it was the triumph of passionate pleading with the souls of men.

Henry Martyn was such a flame of fire that his earnestness beamed from his countenance and spread itself among men. His very portrait seemed inspiring. Charles Simeon had it hanging against the wall in his study, and he said it seemed to say to his very soul, "Be in earnest! Don't trifle! Don't trifle!" and Mr. Simeon would reply, "Yes, I will be in earnest, I won't trifle, for souls are perishing and Christ is to be glorified."

There is no true earnestness apart from a right view of the Cross, a realization of things unseen, and of our associated responsibilities. Richard Cecil manifested it and explained the urgency of his reasons when he said: "I see hell open before me, and thousands of souls shut up there in everlasting darkness. Jesus Christ stands forth to save men from rushing into the bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim His ability and love. I want no fourth idea! Every fourth idea is contemptible! Every fourth idea is impertinent!" The weeping of John Welsh during the night would sometimes awaken his wife, and when she asked why he wept he would say, "I have the souls of three thousand persons to answer for, and I don't know how it is with many of them." Such are the men God uses – men whose souls throb with Divine sympathies, and who say, as Paul did, "This one thing I do."

If physical suffering moves us to the assistance of its victim, and we are willing in fire and flood to endanger our lives to save our fellows, how much more earnest should we be to save their souls which we say we believe are in danger of being lost for ever! How can any lips be cold that have to tell of the awful doom of the impenitent, and of the amazing stoop of Incarnate Love by which the perishing may be lifted up to a place at the right hand of God?

"On such a theme as this
'Tis impious to be calm."

We must feel intensely and preach intensely if we are to make the truth effective in moving others, and only those who are in dead earnest will succeed. A passionless Methodist preacher stands discredited before the world. He can be forgiven almost anything but the lack of earnestness, because this has always stood out as the hallmark of Methodism from its very beginning. Our history is the record of passionate preaching, and the pathos of a soul on fire with zeal, speaking through tears and sobs, prayers and entreaties, is an irresistible power we can never dispense with. This gift is not from the schools. Culture cannot bestow it. It must be sought for in the upper room alone with the Master. To every loyal-hearted preacher there is still available the inspiration to intense yearning for souls to which the two disciples bore grateful testimony when they said,

“Did not our hearts bum within us while He talked with us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?”

“Will the world cry, 'Mad'?”

I would be mad – such madness be my joy!
For thrice it blesses: first my own cold heart;
Then glorifies my God; and plucks, perchance,
My sin-stained brother from the jaws of death.”



8. APPLICATION

When Dr. Joseph Cook was last in England he was asked the difference between present-day preaching and the preaching of fifty years ago. His reply was to the effect that preaching today was more intellectual, but the preaching of the past appealed more to the conscience and the will. Sermons then consisted of introduction, argument, and application; but now the rage for short sermons leaves no time for the application, and it has to be abandoned.

What Wesley thought about preaching without application, two extracts from his Journal will show: “My spirit was stirred within me at the sermons I heard (at Glasgow), both morning and evening. They contained much truth, but were no more likely to save one soul than an Italian opera.”

“This very day I heard many excellent truths at the Kirk (Aberdeen), but as there was no application it was likely to do as much good as the singing of a lark.”

Preaching, when it is endued with Divine power, is the spreading of God's truth over the whole man until it touches intellect, sensibilities, affections, and will; but it should appeal especially to the conscience. Some preachers preach about sinners instead of preaching to them. They studiously avoid being personal, in the sense of making the impression on any person present that he is the man.

Nothing could be more fatal to success. To our unconverted hearers, only those sermons are worth anything which single out each person, saying, “Thou art the man,” and then press upon him, and narrow his way, and hem him in, and smite him down, until, “quivering and trembling, he crouches between the Law that condemns him and the Cross that saves.”

All successful soul-winners have cultivated this directness of appeal. Whitefield did not preach over, or before, or around, but to his hearers. He so dealt with the individual conscience that John Fawcett, one of his hearers in the Bristol Amphitheater, said the preacher dissected his soul as “though he had known his thoughts from ten years old.” It is this sort of preaching, searching the inmost recesses of the soul, dragging forth to the view of conscience the innumerable sins that are hidden under the successive layers of deep and thick darkness, which leads men to cry, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The preaching a worldling likes is that which will permit him to keep on living in sin and yet feel fairly comfortable; but the preaching we recommend will save such men or drive them away from our sanctuaries. This was the effect of the Master's ministry; some were saved, and others “walked no more with Him.” Better offend men than harden them in sin, and nothing is so hardening as the Gospel if it is not responded to.

If we would make Felix tremble, Herod acknowledge that God is with us, and David feel that he is the man, we must study the necessities of the people, find out their errors and sins and false refuges, and what are the truths they most need. We must not consider their tastes and inclinations so much as their spiritual condition. Our business is to probe the wound and touch the very quick of the soul. Only by this means will sinners be pricked in their hearts. It is well sometimes to go into particulars, not superficially glancing at evil in the gross, but mentioning various sins in detail, especially those into which our hearers are likely to have fallen. We must obey the Divine injunction,

“Show My people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Then we should labor to remove prejudices, to resolve doubts, to conquer objections, and to drive the sinner out of his hiding-places.

Let us not be afraid of repetition, which Sydney Smith describes as the secret of impression. The word “inculcation” is full of suggestiveness. It means, “to tread in with the heel.” Familiarity with truths takes away their force and blunts their edge, as the tread of many feet wears away the inscriptions on memorial pavements, unless from time to time they are re-cut. For this reason we need frequently to emphasize admitted truths by varied and repeated re-statement. We once heard the late Mr. S. D. Waddy, Q.C., say that when he was pleading with a jury he often found it necessary to repeat his main points of argument almost as many times as there were men on the jury. Here is a hint for every preacher. What is effective with a jury may be of advantage to a congregation. In military warfare many a fort has been taken by pointing all the guns in one direction and hurling shot after shot upon the one place. Preachers should have a few main ideas to which they give such repeated emphasis that they become like barbed arrows which cannot be withdrawn.

It is only by turning all prayers, appeals, and efforts in the one direction that immediate results can be secured. We often fail to bring men to decision because we have not learned to fix impressions made by the truth, and to clinch nails driven by the Master of the Assembly. The blacksmith drives the blast through his furnace until the iron is at white-heat. Then he lays the iron on the anvil and hammers it into shape. When, with convincing argument and persuasive appeal, we bring souls to white-heat, we must be careful not to allow the impression to cool, but to keep up the pressure on the conscience until the will yields. If we allow the impression to cool, we not only lose our opportunity but leave the hearts that have been softened to greater hardness than before.

If we do not insist upon instant, visible, decisive action when the truth grapples with the conscience and the Spirit strives with men, Satan's fowls of the air will soon catch away the seed that has been sown, and which might have turned the scale of destiny. Firm but gentle pressure is needed at that crisis of soul-history which will turn conviction into decision. We must appeal and re-appeal while the impression of truth is fresh and forcible, until love's earnest entreaty impels and compels men to decide.

Preachers should never forget that preaching is destined for immediate effect. We always miss the mark when we preach with the idea of doing good at some other time. Present impression must be our constant aim. “Now is the accepted time: now is the day of salvation.” Our sermon may be the last which some poor sinner may hear before he is summoned to the bar of God. There is something awfully solemn in the thought that while we are preaching, some hearer's probation (his present life) may end and his salvation or damnation begin. “Who is sufficient for these things?”



9. THE ART OF PERSUASION

Dr. Dale has well said that *“to leave the truth to do its work, and to trust to the hearts and consciences of our hearers to apply it, is a great and fatal mistake.”* Much of our present-day preaching fails, not for lack of ability, nor the want of sincerity, but the absence of that peculiar quality by which we “persuade men” to become followers of Christ. Some say when they have proclaimed the Gospel as best they can that they have done their duty, and they must leave it to work its own way as the leaven does; but Paul says, *“Knowing, therefore, the fear of the Lord, we persuade men.”*

To win men for Christ we must do more than appeal to their understanding. A certain order of mind needs to be convinced by forcible reasoning, but the number is small compared with those who need chiefly emotional persuasion if they are to be won for God. Logic has its place, but it needs to be set on fire with holy fervor; argument must be quickened into persuasion by the living warmth of love. Entreaties and beseechings must blend with instruction, if we mean to “turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.”

Moody once said, “A preacher ought to have a very tender heart to speak with good effect about the penalties of sin.” What we all need is more “yearning pity for mankind,” more intensity of spirit, and more passionate zeal; but we need to do more than to “put on a heart of compassion” -- we must study the art of persuasive speech, and learn how to plead with men so that they may not “be able to gainsay nor resist.”

The Apostles preached as if the salvation of the people depended entirely upon their earnest pleading. They constantly declared in word and practice: “We then are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Their message was followed by tender and plaintive application; they “warned with much entreaty night and day,” and sought by all means to save some.

We all devoutly acknowledge our entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and believe that He alone can “convince” and “convert,” but something depends upon the tone in which we preach, and the directness and holy fervor with which we wrestle with men. We must argue with them as a mother pleads with her wayward boy, that he will not grieve her; or as a fond sister entreats a brother to return to their father's home and seek reconciliation. Any and every appeal must be employed that is at all likely to help us to carry our point. Wit, humor, learning, wisdom, experience, common sense, eloquence, and energy may all be employed in our high calling but to bring men to decision for Christ, persuasiveness beyond all things is an essential qualification.

The late Rev. Henry Bone once described how he was taught a great lesson on the art of persuasive speech at the York Assizes. A young barrister was pleading the case of a man under charge of murder. The prisoner was a worthless fellow who deserved any penalty. But how that young advocate did plead! How he argued! How he appealed to the reason and sentiment and sympathy of the jury! He moved the Court and jury to tears. Had he been pleading for his own life he could not have been more in earnest. When preachers are as practical, as definite, and as persuasive on their Heaven-sent missions as this lawyer was, they will not often preach without conversions.

The same features are prominent in the ministry of all great soul-winners. Whatever their talents or tastes – and there is the widest diversity in the gifts of these men – they are men with one supreme purpose. From first to last their great aim is to bring men to immediate decision for God. Their aim, method, and style are all directed to this one end, and to accomplish their purpose they labor

“With cries, entreaties, tears to save.”

However much they may differ in other respects, salvation-preachers are advocates, pleaders – men who are strong in exhortation and importunity, and who are not ashamed to implore those who hear them to be reconciled to God.

Henry Ward Beecher strongly insists that this heart-to-heart work is essential to success, and Bishop Simpson, who is said to have had “a divine passion for soul-saving,” informs us that these were the prominent features of his ministry during the period when he scarcely ever preached without conversions. We cannot do better than give his experience in his own words: “When I began to preach I did not try to make sermons. I felt that I must, at the peril of my soul, persuade men to come to Christ; I must labor to the utmost of my ability to get sinners converted. For this I thought, studied, wept, fasted, and prayed. My selection of texts, my plan of discourse, was only, and always, with the aim to persuade men to be reconciled to God. I never spoke without the deepest feeling, and unless I saw a strong Divine influence on the congregation, or knew of some soul being converted, I felt sad, and sought retirement to humble myself before God in prayer. My ministry was one of exhortation rather than sermonizing, and I looked always for immediate results. I spoke to men everywhere of Jesus and His love, and had the satisfaction of seeing many brought to the foot of the Cross.”

In making this statement to the students of Yale College in his “Lectures on Preaching,” in 1879, the Bishop was careful to avoid giving the impression that soul-saving preaching demanded the sacrifice of individuality, genius or any special gift. On the contrary, he particularly emphasized the fact that none can preach too well in seeking to bring men to God. The best preachers should be the best soul-winners. All that a man has, and is, should be employed in this greatest of all achievements, alluring men to Christ. “I would breathe into you the devotion of my early ministry,” he remarked, “but I would urge you to make better preparation, and become workmen more approved of God and man.”

Few of us can exhort as the old preachers did, and yet by this means the refined and the vulgar may be reached more than by any other. Dr. McAll, intellectualist and orator, burst into tears when he saw a simple-hearted man do what he could not do – move a whole congregation into a mood of tenderness. Those who have studied the art of persuasive speech often know how to gain an entrance to the heart and ear where many with much more general ability fail. It is the touch of pathos more than anything else that makes the whole world akin.

We must appeal and re-appeal. If sinners do not respond to first appeals we must try again. After one of my Mission services a member of the congregation said: “You invited the people to come to Jesus twenty-six times in the after-meeting tonight, and in almost as many different ways.”

“Did any come?” I inquired. “Yes! One man decided after the last invitation.” “That one was worth all the effort,” I replied, and I still think that the salvation of one soul is worth any and every effort, if for no other reason than that every soul saved gives Christ a special joy only to be exceeded by the joy He will feel when He presents it faultless before the presence of His Father's glory.



10. PULLING IN THE NET

Success or failure depends much more upon our methods of work than most preachers realize. Many are successful enough in finding and skillful in enclosing souls in the gospel net, but they have not learned how to land the fish. Some preach powerful sermons, but their work is comparatively fruitless, because when the crisis comes and souls have to be brought to immediate decision, they do not know what means to adopt to help them at the critical moment.

We know that God alone gives the increase, but all will admit that even in the economy of grace the law of cause and effect prevails, and that God in accomplishing His purposes not only makes use of means, but adapts means to ends. Here, as everywhere, God and man work together. We are to labor as though the work were entirely our own, and pray and feel as if it were God's work alone.

Souls are to be won and we are to win them. Apart from our skill and wisdom there may be failure and defeat where Christ ought to have got the advantage. All fish cannot be caught with the same bait. Successful anglers study the fish, and take with them not the bait that would be most pleasing to their own palate, but the bait most likely to catch fish. Mr. Jowett was once passing through a village in the Lake District where he saw a card in a shop window which, he said, gave him more than a passing thought. On the card were a number of artificial flies, with this striking headline, "Flies with which to catch fish in this locality." The shopkeeper had nothing to say about the requirements of other districts. He had studied the characteristics of the fish in his own neighbourhood, and had discovered what bait was most successful. Why do we not in our work apply the same principle of common sense! We must study the prejudices, habits, and tastes of those we wish to win for Christ, and address ourselves accordingly. Wise men are wedded to usefulness, not to methods. If the plans we are adopting do not succeed, we must try other methods. Unless we cultivate fertility of expedience, the Church will continue to crawl along slowly, while the world is moving at electric pace. We must bait our hook according to the fish we want to catch, and become "all things to all men," that we may gain some.

Nothing is more important to fishers of men than to know how to conduct an After-meeting. "The After-meeting," says Dr. Pierson, "is simply an arrangement suggested by common sense and experience to prevent the truth from losing its grip upon souls. The net already cast, it drags to shore; the driven nail, it clinches; the hot iron, it hammers into shape. That is the philosophy of it in a nutshell; and this sensible and rational means the Holy Spirit abundantly uses and approves."

An eminent soul-winner writes: "I had often felt the necessity of some measure that would bring sinners to a stand. I had found, that with the higher classes especially, the great obstacle was fear of being known as anxious inquirers. I found also, that something was needed to make the impression that they were expected at once to give their hearts to God; something that would cause them to act as publicly as they had acted in their sins, something that would commit them to the service of Christ. When I had called them simply to stand in the congregation that had a good effect, and it answered the purpose for which it was intended; but after all, something more was necessary to bring them from among the ungodly to a renunciation of sinful ways, and a public committal of themselves to God."

Preaching deals with men in the mass; but they are converted one by one. With rare exceptions, unless the Word preached is followed by personal dealing, it does not convert. The After-meeting not only affords opportunity for open confession of Christ, but it is invaluable as a means of bringing anxious inquirers into contact with ministers and other workers who can give the necessary advice and instruction at that critical period in their

religious history.

Preachers vary much in their methods of conducting these meetings, but all agree that to be successful there must be as little break as possible between the preaching service and the meeting which follows. The one should merge into the other without interruption, diversion or delay. Even a slight diversion may drive away all real concern, and dissipate impressions. Anthems, vespers, and organ postludes sometimes destroy the continuity which is essential to success.

It is well to meet prevailing notions of decorum far as is consistent with faithfulness and duty, but as mere sentimental attachments to regulation methods should not be allowed to interfere with necessary improvements and developments. Occasionally it may be a good plan for silent prayer to follow the sermon, and then while the congregation is bowed before God to plead for immediate decision for Christ. This might be done under very special circumstances, when the power of God is unusually present, but as a rule it is better to close the first service before attempting to pull in the net.

Let it be remembered that the man who has preached has more influence with the congregation while his spell is upon them than any other person is likely to have, and that it often breaks the continuity of the service to allow another personality to come between the preacher and the people. For this reason it is often best for the preacher to conduct the after-meeting single-handed, to plead with God and the people alternately, and not to allow any but himself to lead in audible prayer. This method does more than maintain continuity; it prevents those persons inflicting themselves upon the meeting whose dreary repetitions have become intolerable to all except those who are well seasoned.

All who adopt this plan find their congregations remain to the after-meeting in a manner which astonishes those who adhere to the old method of two prayers and a hymn. We do not advise that this method or any other should be invariably adopted. The preacher should have no fixed rule in his movements. It is well if no two meetings are conducted alike. Unexpectedness in the conduct of meetings will not infrequently surprise the unconverted out of their defenses. Means and measures greatly change in effectiveness and often cease to be effective. What was once useful may be worn out. Winners of souls need to be constantly adapting themselves to changing circumstances and varying spheres.

Sometimes it may be well to use an inquiry-room; at other times and places the communion rail would answer best. Whether we should ask the awakened to come forward, to rise in their seats, to remain behind for conversation and prayer, or whether no movement should be called for, can only be learned by intelligent observation and experience. Our Lord expects us reverently and diligently to use our faculties and acquire skill as fishers in the world of men. Those who honestly desire better and more useful equipment should borrow hints and suggestions from all available sources, and study the ways and methods of men whom God has been pleased to bless. If they set about this investigation as those who mean to do great business for the Lord, they will soon learn how to win souls.



11. FAITH NECESSARY TO SUCCESS

Many a preacher fails by anticipation; he expects to fail, and he does. Success in soul-

saving depends upon many things, but nothing is more essential than faith. We need faith in God, faith in our mission, and faith in ourselves. There is much truth in the saying,

“They can, who believe they can.
“Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the prize we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.”

It is not by human might or power that souls are saved. “Convert a soul without the Spirit of God!” cries Mr. Spurgeon; “why, you cannot even make a fly, much less create a new heart and a right spirit.” The awakening of the souls of men and their spiritual renewal are as utterly the personal acts of Christ as were any of the miracles of His earthly history. It is not truth – no matter how sacred; it is not spiritual motive – no matter how urgent; it is not our own earnestness – no matter how deep and how impassioned – that will move men to penitence and draw them to God. The salvation of a soul is a Divine work, and only Divine power can accomplish it. We must never forget that the Spirit of God is the foremost factor, the indispensable Agent, the primary cause, of every true conversion.

Moody was right when he said, “The Holy Spirit is the One Great Revivalist.” But while it is true in one sense that the work is all of God, it is equally true that God seldom works apart from human cooperation. What man can do he is expected to do. At the grave of Lazarus human hands “must roll away the stone.” God does what man cannot do, but He always uses the human as far as the human can reach. It is a common law of the Kingdom of God, that whenever possible Divine gifts are passed on to men through other men.

From the beginning to the end of salvation there must be both Divine and human action. Peter declares that in Christian life “we are kept by the power of God,” but James teaches that the godly man must “keep himself unspotted from the world.” The Bible does not contradict itself. The explanation is that, while grace is altogether the gift of God, we ourselves have an important part to play. The gifts of grace are only ours when the conditions are complied with. We must appropriate by faith the help and blessing which God has provided in the gift and work of His Son. In very much the same way God and man work together for the world's salvation. There is truth in the paradox:

Christ alone can save the world,
But Christ cannot save the world alone.

Dr. Dale says, “To think that we ourselves can stir the hearts of men, and instruct their understanding, is to be guilty of an atheistic presumption which will utterly destroy the effectiveness of our ministry,” and yet there is no more spiritual and mysterious truth taught in the New Testament than that Christ, our Head, is actually and entirely dependent upon the members of His body for the accomplishment of His purposes of mercy in the salvation of men.

“It must be done by both; God never without me.
I never without God.”

We must work as though everything depended upon us, and pray in recognition of the fact that everything depends upon God. It is not only a privilege and an honor, but indispensable to success, that the preacher of the Gospel should understand that he is called to partnership with God in His saving work. We pray God to save the world; but He sends us to do it, and what He sends to do can be done. God never sends us to do anything we cannot do through the strength which He is willing to give. The command, “Go and disciple all nations,” is preceded by the declaration, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,” which means that Christ pledges Himself to make effectual what He sends us to do in His Name. The command is in itself a promise of ability to perform. If He bids us go with such assurances of His Presence and power, He will seal the truth on the hearts and consciences of those to whom we are sent. God places His resources at our

disposal, but the measure of blessing is the measure of our faith. Faith is the connecting-link between our weakness and His Almightyness. If souls are to be saved, our faith must work on their behalf. God does not put forth His power except in answer to the prayer and in response to the faith of His people. Our Lord confessed to limitations when He said He could not do many mighty works because of their unbelief, and the same conditions prevail today. God's hands are bound unless we believe for the putting forth of His power. It is not sufficient that we preach the Gospel faithfully; we must expect conversions when we preach, and it will be done very largely according to our faith.

An eminent soul-winner, when asked to explain the secret of his power, replied, "The secret is simple enough. My sermons are God-given; they are studied as in His very presence, and delivered with the full assurance that He will bless to men's salvation what He has given me to say." Writing to a young preacher, Thomas Collins said, "I expect salvation in every sermon." It is this expectant faith which looks for present results that God always honors, and which is essential to a soul-winning ministry.

Collins used often to say, "I shall have souls tonight. God will give them. I know His sign." And if we waited upon God as he did we should know God's "sign," and carry with us into the pulpit such assurance and confidence as would overcome all difficulties and make victory sure. Unbelief limits and paralyzes the arm of Omnipotence itself, but "he that has faith does what he cannot do, attempts the impossible and performs it."



12. PENTECOSTAL POWER

Nobody ever was or ever will be converted merely by the preaching of the Gospel. It is the Gospel applied and enforced by the Holy Spirit that saves men. Like the Arctic sun, it is possible to give light without heat. Clear views of truth may be set forth, but without the Spirit's unction no convincing power will attend their enunciation. All natural gifts are good, but they are perilous if depended upon instead of the Holy Spirit. The more gifts the better, if all are subsidized and sanctified by the Spirit of God; but apart from absolute reliance upon Him, human ability may become a snare. Said the late Mrs. Booth, "The history of the Church proves that just in degree as she has come to have the human, she has ceased to have faith in the supernatural." When numbers and prestige decline, how often do we resort to all kinds of external aids and appliances, instead of seeking to have restored the lost power of God! Our work is spiritual, and only spiritual power can accomplish it.

It is lamentable to see how frequently preachers take that one and essential condition of success – the presence and power of the Holy Spirit – for granted, while they spare no pains to secure all other elements of necessary preparation. No preacher can be inspired to the maximum of possible service who has not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire, Christian life begins at Calvary, but effective service begins with the baptism of fire.

It was this baptism that prepared the Apostles for their work. Before Pentecost there was not much service rendered by them that was worth the name, but with the Spirit's baptism they entered upon a new phase of life and service. The visible tongues of fire were only emblems of what had passed within. What new creatures they then became! How their gross conceptions of Christ's Kingdom were purged away, and how they were raised from earthliness to spirituality! Their intellects were flooded with Divine light, their souls throbbed with Divine sympathies, and their tongues spoke so wonderfully of the things of

God that all who had known them previously were amazed, saying, "What meaneth this?"

They were raised to a new altitude; a new energy and force possessed them. Each became strong as an iron pillar -- "the weakest as David, and the strong as the angel of the Lord." They met together as the sincere but timid and partially enlightened followers of Christ, but they left the upper room full of light and power and love. After this experience, difficulties melted into empty air. There was no limit to their hopes, because there was no limit to their power. Their strength was not "as the strength of ten," but as the strength of the Almighty. Nothing could resist the wisdom and Spirit by which they spoke. Multitudes were pricked to the heart, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Within one generation Paganism was shaken to the core, and Christianity had spread throughout the known world.

The baptism of Fire was, and still is, a sort of initiatory rite to a life of service and victory. The analogy of the Sacrament of Baptism connects the baptism of the Spirit with a new era in Christian life. None can read the lives of the early Methodist preachers without being impressed with the fact that those whose labors were pre-eminently owned of God bear witness to the reception of a distinct definite blessing which they received subsequent to conversion. Some of them termed it "the second blessing," but they really received their Pentecost, and suddenly became bold, mighty, aggressive and conquering.

Have we not all known men who possessed this wonderful gift? They seemed to be able to look into the very souls of their hearers, and to talk to them with an almost Divine authority and instantaneous effect. Some of them were not profound thinkers, or powerful speakers, but they were wholly devoted to God and full of desire for the salvation of souls. When they spoke they seemed surcharged with an energy which could not be called their own. They had a something which touches the tongue and enables them to declare with astonishing effectiveness, the message of grace. It is like the holy oil poured on Aaron's head, and which, running down to the skirts of his garments, communicated to the whole man a charming fragrance. We have felt at a loss to account for their influence, and have been compelled to confess that the power they possessed was not human, but Divine. They had received that Divine endowment which is called unction -- the crowning gift of the Holy Spirit for service. It is neither pathos, nor eloquence, nor psychological power, nor mental force: but a subtle, mysterious, unaccountable, and almost irresistible influence which God alone can bestow. No words can describe the gift, but it may be known and felt by all.

The experience of the late D. L. Moody, is very striking. We give it in his own words: "When I was preaching in Farwell Hall, in Chicago, I never worked harder to prepare my sermons than I did then. I preached and preached, but it was beating against the air. A good woman used to say, 'Mr. Moody, you don't seem to have power in your preaching.' Oh, my desire was that I might have a fresh anointing! I requested this woman and a few others to come and pray with me every Friday at four O'clock. Oh, how piteously I prayed that God might fill the empty vessel! After the fire in Chicago I was in New York City, and, going into the Bank on Wall Street, it seemed as if I felt a strange and mighty power coming over me. I went up to the hotel, and there in my room I wept before God, and cried, 'O my God, stay Thy hand.' He gave me such fulness that it seemed more than I could contain. May God forgive me if I should seem to speak in a boastful way, but I do not know that I have preached a sermon since but God has given me some soul. I would not be back where I was four years ago for all the wealth of the world. I seemed a wonder to some of you, but I am a greater wonder to myself than to anyone else. *These are the very same sermons I preached in Chicago, word for word.* They are not new sermons, but the power of God. It is not a new Gospel, but the old Gospel with the Holy Spirit of power."

Such was Mr. Moody's account of the anointing which made him what he was. Nothing else can make a man so powerful and glorious in his life and history. We know nothing else that is needed to make many preachers all that God meant them to be, but this baptism of fire. Nothing bums its way through all obstacles like fire. It consumes forests, melts metallic barriers, and marches on with the tread of a conqueror. Nothing can stand before it. Give us men on fire with the Holy Spirit, and nothing can prevent Christianity from becoming the all-conquering power in the world it is destined to be.

The wonder is that any preacher can be content to work without this priceless gift. Much better would it be for the world if the Church would cease making weak efforts to save it, and wait upon God until it is endued with this power from on high. With it we shall accomplish more in one year than in a hundred years of working in our own strength. We claim to be sharers of Pentecostal privileges, and yet how few have received this baptism which Christ is exalted to bestow! Prayer and faith are the conditions. "There in the heavens is the residue of the Spirit; prayer taps the reservoir, and the outlet widens as we pray." The disciples continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.

We often speak and act as if it were the most difficult thing in the world to obtain this fulness of the Spirit, and yet it is certain that there is no blessing which the Father is so ready to bestow upon those who ask Him as this very gift. More willing is He to give the Holy Spirit to each believer than a mother to give the healing medicine to her dying child, or a father to give food and raiment to his soldier-son who has just returned from the war. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"



13. SILENT TIMES

In these days of haste and hurry and excessive speed, there is danger of forgetting that the value of our work depends much more on what we are than on what we say or do. In its recoil from the monastery, modern piety tends rather to action than to worship. On every hand we are incited to work, and many are so occupied with outward activities that they have no time to renew their wasted strength by personal communion with God. We run our souls thin by our incessant action, and often, in dispensing to others, impart to them what is necessary for ourselves. Dean Vaughan went so far as to say, "Many a Christian worker's activity is the grave of his spiritual life."

While we hope that this is true only in very exceptional cases, we all know how possible it is to be absorbed in the work we are doing, that our experience becomes shallow and our sense of the Divine Presence is dulled, if not lost. "Thy servant was busy here and there, and he was gone." Our hands may be so full that our hearts get empty. We may be so constantly giving that we have no time for getting, until we have little or nothing to give. To keep fresh, tender, unselfish, and devout we must have quiet hours for feeding our souls and waiting upon God. Nothing can compensate for the neglect of these times of retirement when the devotional spirit can be cultivated, and we can learn to draw secret strength and life from the fountain of life in God.

The fact needs to be strongly emphasized that no number of meetings, no fellowship with Christian friends, no amount of Christian activity, can be substituted for a still and secret life with God. Inward decay and loss of power can only be prevented by an increase of devotional spirit proportioned to the expansion of our outward activities. Activity can

never sustain itself. Withdraw the vital force which animates and propels it, and it falls like a dead arm. Our bodies can better thrive without nourishment than we can grow strong and useful in Christian life without fellowship with God.

It may not be necessary to make long prayers, but it is essential to seek isolation from the world -- "silent times," when we can commune with our hearts and be still. We must give God time to speak. We must allow the heated wheels of life to cool. We must mend our nets. We must adjust the focus of spiritual vision. We must receive from God before we can give to others. Before we can move them He must move us. We need the deepened emotions, the strengthened convictions, and the clearer vision of the Mount to prepare us to carry comfort and healing to the sin-stricken multitude at the mountain's base.

It has been said that no great work in literature or in science was ever wrought by a man who did not love solitude, and we may lay it down as an elemental principle of religion that no large growth of holiness, or real and continuous success in Christian work, was ever gained by one who did not take time to be often and long alone with God. This kind goeth out not but by prayer and fasting. Whitefield says, "Whole days and weeks have I spent prostrate on the ground, in silent and vocal prayer." Someone spoke to John Nelson, making unfavorable comparison of John Wesley with a prominent religious teacher of the day. Nelson replied, "He has not stayed in the upper room like John Wesley." It is there where we get our message, and where we win our battles before they are fought.

"Our Gideons must Isaiahs be,
Visions first – then victory."

If the spiritual element in our work is that which makes it tell, and we cannot have that without personal intimacy with God, time is not lost which is spent in looking into God's face and into our own hearts. Much better would it be for us to relinquish some of the activities of life than to lose the tone and temper of heart which come from sitting at the Saviour's feet and holding communion with Him. Most of us would do more for God if we would do less and spend more time in getting ready.

When Luther had a specially busy and exciting day, he always allowed himself longer time than usual for his private devotions. A wise man once said he was too busy to be in a hurry; he meant that if he allowed himself to become hurried he could not do what he had to do. It is possible to have so much to do that we get nothing done. A workman would soon faint if he did not stop for meals. The mower must stop occasionally to sharpen his scythe, and it is just as necessary that busy workers should have quiet periods to renew their spent strength and seek preparation for further usefulness and service. We need what Dr. Dale said Westcott had -- "repose among eternal things." Nothing but prayer and meditation can give that.

True devotion will never displace duty. It always leads to earnest effort for the world's good and God's glory. We have no sympathy with the easy-going, lazy optimism which sits down with folded arms, indifferent to the gigantic moral and social evils by which we are surrounded. Real fellowship with Christ means increased sympathy with His dominant passion, the salvation of those for whom He died, and furnishes an amazing stimulus to unremitting toil in ministering the healing balm to the wounded and dying souls about us. None are so ready and well fitted to carry God's message of comfort to weary burdened hearts as those whose lips have been newly touched with the live coal from God's altar.



QUOTATIONS

If we do not catch men we are in great danger of losing even the desire to catch them. Our purposed activity is in peril of becoming a dream. Let me counsel my fellow-preachers in the lay ministry to make up their minds to catch one soul, to go about it day and night until the soul is won. And when they have gained one man for the Master, I have then no fear as to what will be their resultant mood. The joy of catching a soul is unspeakable! When we have got one soul we become possessed by the passion for souls. Get one and you will want a crowd! -- J. H. Jowett

Soul-saving is the greatest business in the world, and. I doubt if God has for us a more glorious work in heaven. Think of the priceless value of a soul!... Herein, then, is the distinguishing characteristic of the evangelistic sermon – it takes aim. The evangelist pleads for a verdict. His immediate duty – and it should be one that impassions all his powers is to win men then and there for Christ. And what applies to the evangelist should be applicable to all preaching; it should have a perfectly definite purpose and goal. Otherwise it is lecturing, not preaching; and it is the use of the pulpit for lecturing instead of preaching that has done more than anything else to reduce its influence, and to produce both in the speaker and the hearer a sense of unreality. -- W J. Dawson

It has been the sin of my life that I have not always taken aim. I have been a lover of subjects. If I had loved men more, and loved subjects only as God's instruments of good for men, it would have been better, and I should have more to show for all my labour under the sun. -- Nathaniel Burton

Our main work, our supreme work, our work, before which all other pales and becomes dim, is to tell the good news, to go everywhere, letting everybody know about the unsearchable riches of Christ.” -- J. H. Jowett

A sermon is strong only when it is powerful to produce the effect for which a sermon is made. If the great end of a sermon is to arouse a man to hate his sins, and to see in Christ a divine Saviour, and so awaken him as to cause him to immediately accept Christ and find forgiveness, then that sermon is a strong sermon which brings about that result; and the man who attempts to do it in any other way, and fails, has preached a weak sermon, no matter how scholarly nor how splendid its rhetoric, nor how profound its thought, nor how dignified its delivery. Sermons are strong that pull down the works of the devil and capture sinners for Jesus Christ.” -- Louis Albert Banks

Preach the word. Feed the flock. Win souls. An ordinary man may become extraordinary when the Spirit of the Almighty Son of God dwelleth in him.... Keep eternity in view. Let the light of the “great white throne” fall on your page when you study, and on your pulpit when you preach. -- Cuyler.

Luther's list of the qualifications of a preacher was as follows:--

He should be able to teach plainly and in order.
He should have a good head.
Good power of language.
A good voice.
A good memory.
He should know when to stop.
He should be sure of what he means to say.
And be ready to stake body and soul, goods and reputation, on its truth.
He should study diligently.
And suffer himself to be vexed and criticized by everyone.

The fault of much really able preaching is that it lacks simplicity, it is too technical, elaborate, and massive. Not too scholarly for the cultured, but quite misconceived for the multitude. Many things fail in nature because they are a little too good – that is, a little too elaborate – for their environment; and many sermons fail for exactly the same reason. The life of Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, is one from which a preacher can learn very much, and it contains instruction on this point. Dr. Dale was not a preacher for the people, and he felt that it was so, regretted that it was so. Some of his own congregation urged that his preaching moved at a height – intellectual and spiritual – far above that of the congregation generally. His prayers, too, were also far removed from the actual experience of the people. This occurs in his later diary: “I felt rather strongly towards the close of last year that in one respect among others my ministry – specially of late years – had been gravely defective. I have striven to press home upon men and to illustrate the very central contents of the Christian Gospel; but I have not recognized practically the obligation to use in preaching all those secondary powers which contribute to create and sustain intellectual and emotional interest in preaching. The more strenuous intellectual effort, in order to make truth clear and to put it strongly, has not been neglected; but there has not been the legitimate use, either in the choice of subjects or their treatment, of those elements which are of a rhetorical character, and which raise the audience into a condition which is perhaps friendly to the reception of Christian truth.” -- W. L. Watkinson

What tells most of all is the personality of the preacher. This is one of the prime elements in preaching. The effect of a sermon depends, first of all, on what is said, and next, on how it is said; but, hardly less, on who says it. There are men, says Emerson, who are heard to the ends of the earth, though they speak in a whisper. We are so constituted that what we hear depends very much for its effect on how we are disposed towards him who speaks. -- James Stalker

Whether we read of a Catholic Vianney, of a Presbyterian Baxter, of a Baptist Bunyan, or a Methodist Wesley, their power as persuaders and winners of souls came, not from the particular “ism” they preached, but from the personality, the spirit that was in them, dominated as it was by a higher Personality behind. -- J. Brierley

There could be nothing more absurd than the depreciation to which emotion is subjected, usually by cold-blooded pedants who aim to pass for superior persons.... Nothing can take the place of feeling, for without it the religious instinct misses its supreme satisfaction. It is not in thought, but in feeling, that we come nearest to God, Whose name is Love. -- Arthur S. Peake

Be earnest, earnest, earnest!
Do what thou dost as if the stake were Heaven,
And that thy last deed ere the
Judgment Day!”
-- Kingsley –

Preaching must be direct. It must be addressed to the people right then and there before the preacher. He is not giving out a message to be diffused around through the community. He is a messenger from heaven with a free pardon in his hand for a man condemned to die, and that man sits right there in the pew before him. He must get the man to see the pardon, to feel his need of it, and to accept it before he leaves the house. -- Louis Albert Banks

Is it the conscience which is to be affected? The clumsy operator begins to assail it straight with denunciations of sin, but, instead of producing penitence, he only rouses the whole man into proud and angry defense; whereas a single touch, no heavier than an infant's finger, applied away up somewhere, remote from conscience, in the region of imagination, may send an electric shock down through the whole being, and shake the conscience from center to circumference. -- James Stalker

One has heard preachers who seemed to think that they had done all when they told it clearly with a kind of “there it is, take it or leave it as you like” air. But, brethren, if we have any conception of our work or any communion with our Master we shall feel that we poorly represent it and wholly fail in resemblance to Him unless we plead with men. The voice tremulous with earnestness, persistent in entreaty, is, at its softest and most winning cadence, but a poor echo of His. But it will carry farther than the thunders of a whole park of logical artillery, and move hearts as nothing else will. Let us not be afraid of letting ourselves down. Let us not be ashamed of emotional preaching, “praying them with much entreaty that they would receive the gift.” -- Alex Maclaren

The power of the evangelist usually lies not so much in superiority of gift as in superior earnestness, manifesting itself in great directness of appeal and a positive belief in immediate results. And, if that be the case, it is clear that it is a gift within the reach of most of us. If we have it not, it is because we have not sought to possess it. We have not made it our business to save souls. We have not studied the art of persuasion.” -- W. J. Dawson

The science of soul-winning is the oldest, the grandest, the most complicated, the most important of all the sciences. There is no path in which consecrated ambition can so fitly and gracefully walk as in this. Some preachers are as awkward in an after-meeting as a galloping cow. We must have the skill so frequently shown in political conspiracies. The more wisdom we show in our message and methods, the more likely are we to have God's blessing. We need to keep plenty of flies in our fly-book, and then pray for heavenly wisdom as to which to use. If one does not answer, try another. The greater the soul, the more thought and prayer should be given to win it. We must know what to do in times of spiritual crisis, and be ready to use any proper means to gain the advantage for Christ.

The soul-winner must be conscious that he is doing God's work, and that it is God's message he bears to men. -- James Stalker

When personal holiness in a preacher rises to pre-eminence, it is apt to declare itself in an expectant faith. He is apt to look for grand and speedy advances of Christ's Kingdom. -- Austin Phelps

Mean conversions, expect them, and prepare for them. -- C. H. Spurgeon

All true faith has in it an element of venture. In faith in God's promises and commands, Christ's soldiers may venture much, and they will not be disappointed in their expectations. -- Robert Clark

I once said to myself, in the foolishness of my heart: "What sort of sermon must that have been which was preached by Peter when three thousand souls were converted at once?" What sort of sermon? Such as other sermons. There is nothing to be found in it extraordinary. The effect was not produced by eloquence, but by the mighty power of God present with the Word." How many have felt, if they have not said, what Cecil thus gives expression to! You must have time to enter into your own heart and be quiet, you must learn to collect yourselves, to be alone with yourselves, alone with your own thoughts, alone with eternal realities which are behind the rush and confusion of mortal things, alone with God. -- Dean Church

By all means use sometimes to be alone;
Salute thyself, see what thy soul doth wear;
Dare to look in thy closet – for 'tis thine own –
And tumble up and down what thou findest there.
-- George Herbert –



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