

The Divine Art of Soul-Winning

by

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CHAPTER 2 -

THE FITNESS OF THE WORKER

"I HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION that everyone is not called to be a soul-winner," said a young man recently. That would make pleasant hearing, indeed, for those who desire to shirk soul-winning work, but, unfortunately for them the young man's conclusion was erroneous! He would find it exceedingly difficult to substantiate his case from Scripture. So long as the Great Commission is unrevoked, so long as "**Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature**" remains in the Sacred Volume, there rests on each the personal responsibility of endeavoring to win souls for CHRIST, and for this he requires a special fitness.

I. AN UNWAVERING PURPOSE

Since this work is of such supreme importance, the wise soul-winner will seek the very highest qualifications for the work. All great soul-winners have been impelled by such a purpose. The gifted American evangelist, Dr. Nettleton, whose labors in America so often culminated in revival, one time put the question to himself: "What will I wish I had done with my life thousands of years hence?" His answer to that question resulted in his devoting himself throughout life to the work of seeking to win souls.

Not many hours after his own conversion as a result of receiving a letter of appeal from his intimate friend, that keen soul-winner, Dr. Clay Trumbull, formed a great life resolve. Let me give you his own words: "The purpose I formed was, as an imperative duty, not to fail in my Christian life in confessing CHRIST to others. I determined that as I loved CHRIST, and as CHRIST loved souls, I would press CHRIST on the individual soul, so that none who were in the proper sphere of my individual responsibility or influence should lack the opportunity of meeting the question, whether or not they would individually trust and follow CHRIST.

The resolve I made was that whenever I was in such intimacy with a soul as to be justified in choosing my theme of conversation, the theme of themes should have prominence between us, so that I might learn his need, and if possible meet it." This life-resolve was faithfully adhered to for more than fifty years. Who can estimate its results? Have you made such a resolve, my reader? If not, will you fall on your knees as you read and make it now?

When Dr. Lyman Beecher lay dying, a ministerial friend said to him: "Dr. Beecher, you know a great deal; tell us what is the greatest of all things." The dying preacher replied: "It is not theology; it is not controversy; it is to save souls."

If such be true, shall we not place ourselves in the hands of the Master Soul-winner, saying: "MASTER, make me, with all my handicaps and disabilities, a fisher of men"? He will surely respond, as He did to failing Peter: "**Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**"

II. AN UNASSAILABLE ASSURANCE OF HIS OWN SALVATION

This is another indispensable qualification of the soul-winner. Suppose one on whom you were pressing the claims of CHRIST turned to you with the question, "Are you absolutely certain you yourself are saved?" what would you answer? Could you ring out an unhesitating, "Yes, thank GOD, I am"? Our LORD said: "**We speak that we do know**" (John 3:11). All around us are men and women, old and young, who are longing to find someone who knows, who can speak on this subject with conviction and authority. They are tired of negations, doubts, and speculations. They have enough of their own. If you do not possess this unshakable assurance, search the Word of GOD until you "**know that you have eternal life**" (I John 5:13).

Many truly converted people know nothing of a settled assurance of salvation because the life has never been fully yielded to CHRIST. The writer, although born again, was often tormented by doubts until at the age of about twenty he wholly surrendered to the Lordship of CHRIST. Since that hour no doubt has found even temporary lodgment in his heart.

III. A WORKING KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES

The soul-winner must not only believe the Bible, but know and study it. Other knowledge is doubtless valuable, but a knowledge of the Bible is of paramount importance. Nothing can take its place. Every soul-winner must acquire as speedily as possible, first, a general knowledge of the Bible, its main contents and teachings, and then how its message can best be applied in this work, for the Bible is the soul-winner's only kit of tools. Just as the physician does not give the same prescription for each case, so the same verse will not cause the light to break on every soul. Hence the necessity of being familiar with all the Scriptures which are relevant to soul-winning work. That worker will be most successful whose mind is most liberally stored with apt and suitable Scriptures.

Murray McCheyne used to say: "It is not our comment on the Word that saves, but the Word itself."

When argument and persuasion fail to produce conviction or to bring the soul to decision, the intelligent use of the "**Sword of the Spirit**" often produces the desired result. How frequently one has seen opposition silenced and interest awakened by the sledge-hammer blows of the Word when wielded in the power of the SPIRIT. It is the Word which the SPIRIT uses to convict of sin (Acts 2:37), and to reveal the way of salvation (II Timothy 3:15). It is with the Bible that objections and excuses can be met, or modern heresies exposed; therefore the soul-winner must

be a man of the Book if he is to know success.

To summarize in the words of Dr. Torrey:

1. A soul-winner should know how to use his Bible so as to show others their need of a SAVIOUR.
2. To show them that JESUS CHRIST is just the SAVIOUR they need.
3. To show them how to make Him their own SAVIOUR.
4. To deal with difficulties which hinder them from doing this.

To these we would add:

5. The soul-winner should have a living and active faith in the power of the Word of GOD to save the most difficult case.

One of the first students of Spurgeon's College came to him with the lament: "I have been preaching now for some months and I do not think I have had a single conversion." "And do you expect that the LORD is going to bless you and save souls every time you open your mouth?" said Spurgeon. "No, sir," he replied. "Well, then, that is why you do not get souls saved," was the rejoinder. "If you had believed, the LORD would have given you the blessing." Our faith in the Word and power of GOD must be such that we will expect GOD to save souls through our instrumentality.

IV. A HABITUALLY PRAYERFUL ATTITUDE

How many possibilities of error there are in such a work as this! The worker must be led as to which direction to take, and to whom to speak; to rightly diagnose the case, and to prescribe the appropriate remedy. Well might he cry with Paul: "**Who is sufficient for these things?**" Only as the heart is constantly being lifted to GOD in prayer for promised wisdom will he be preserved from blundering. He must pray before, during, and after his work.

It was because Philip was a man of prayer and in touch with GOD that he was guided to that seeking soul in the most unlikely spot, the desert.

An old friend of our family who lived in a Southern city, blind physically but exceptionally keensighted spiritually, had on many occasions unsuccessfully endeavored to bring the light of salvation to an ignorant old woman who lived nearby. At last he came to his wits' end and left the room to pray. In his prayer he told the LORD that he had done all he could. Was there no Scripture applicable to this case? Then a verse came to his mind:

"**Ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.**" "But, LORD," he protested, "that has nothing to do with salvation." Try as he would, he could get no other message, so he quoted this verse to his friend.

"Does it say that?" she eagerly asked; "I thought it was all for men. '**If any man thirst,**' but this verse says: '**Ye shall be my sons and daughters.**'" Merely human wisdom would never have suggested this verse as the solution of the old woman's difficulties, but through prayer he was

given the unerring counsel of the SPIRIT of GOD. He often used this incident as an illustration of the absolute necessity of depending on the SPIRIT of GOD for the "**word in season.**"

It has been said that for the personal worker the rule of the road is: "Go as you pray, and pray as you go."

V. A LOVINGLY TACTFUL APPROACH

Tact has been defined as the art of putting ourselves in the place of others so that we may know their needs and supply them, their prejudices, and conciliate them. It is an intuitive perception of what is proper or fitting; the mental ability of saying and doing the right thing at the right time, so as not to unnecessarily offend or anger. This qualification is sadly often conspicuous by its absence, and the worker spoils the very work about which he is so concerned.

On one occasion, D. L. Moody, without mentioning religion, played tennis a whole afternoon with a young fellow who was expecting to be button-holed at once, and was ready to resent any personal dealing. It was after he had won the young fellow to himself that he won him for CHRIST. He exhibited true tact.

Tact is not always a natural gift, but may in measure be acquired by observation, study, and prayer. We should try to imagine how we would feel and react if we were in the position of our "prospect," and act accordingly. Much is gained if we can make people feel at ease with us.

The story is told of a gentleman crossing the ocean who was distressed by the profanity of several men in the party. Finally, he said to them: "Gentlemen, I believe all of you are Englishmen, and if so, you believe in fair play, do you not?"

"Certainly, that is characteristic of Britons everywhere."

"Well, gentlemen, I notice that you have been indulging in a good deal of profanity, and I think it is my turn to swear next. Isn't that fair?"

"Of course it is," said the others.

"Very well, remember that you are not to swear again till I have had my turn."

"But you will not take your turn."

"I certainly will just as soon as I see a real occasion for it."

All this was done in a playful way, but the result of his tactful approach was that they kept their profanity bottled up for the rest of the voyage.

VI. THE ENDUEMENT WITH POWER

Although we have placed this qualification last in order, it is not because it is least in

importance. Without it, one may have formed an unwavering purpose, enjoy an unassailable assurance, possess a working knowledge of the Scriptures, be very prayerful, and exercise much tact, and yet not be a successful soul-winner. With it, the value of all this equipment is immeasurably enhanced.

From the study of the biographies of all great soul-winners will emerge the fact that in each life there came a crisis, a new and fuller surrender to the LORD, and an enduement with power from on high for the discharge of the ministry entrusted to them. They learned to recognize in the HOLY SPIRIT Himself their power for service. If you know little or nothing of His empowering in your experience, do not rest until it becomes a vital reality in your life. (Read Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 10:38; I Corinthians 2:4, etc.)

Ponder the marvelous transformation in Peter after he had been "**endued with power from on high.**" He preached with a passion, a fearlessness, a convicting power of which he was previously incapable. His words from then on left saving impressions on the minds of his hearers. Then, and then only, did he become the great "**[fisher] of men.**" Seek and obtain this enduement, without which your most earnest endeavors will prove abortive.

I am trusting Thee for power,
Thine can never fail,
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me
Must prevail.

~ end of chapter 2 ~
