

WORDS OF COUNSEL FOR CHRISTIAN WORKERS

by C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon's practical guidance for those engaged in Christian ministry and service, offering earnest words of counsel and encouragement for effective Christian work.

20 Chapters

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Chapter 1

BOOK: Words of Counsel for Christian Workers

Words of Counsel for Christian Workers by

C. H. Spurgeon

Chapter 1: An Earnest Man

An Earnest Man

HALF-A-DOZEN words from a tender mother to a boy who is just leaving home for an apprenticeship, may drop like gentle dew from heaven upon him. A few sentences from a kind and prudent father given to the daughter, still unconverted, as she enters upon her married life, and to her husband, kindly and affectionately put, may make that household for ever a house of God. A kind word dropped by a brother to a sister, a little letter written from a sister to her brother, though it should be only a line or two, may be God's arrow of grace. I have known even such little things as a tear or an anxious glance work wonders.

You perhaps may have heard the story of Mr. Whitefield, who made it his wont wherever he stayed to talk to the members of the household about their souls—with each one personally; but stopping at a certain house with a Colonel, who was all that could be wished except a Christian, he was so pleased with the hospitality he received and so charmed with the general character of the good Colonel and his wife and daughters, that he did not like to speak to them about decision as he would have done if they had been less amiable characters. He had stopped with them for a week, and during the last night, the Spirit of God visited him so that he could not sleep. "These people," said he, "have been very kind to me, and I have not been faithful to them; I must do it before I go; I must tell them that whatever good thing they have, if they do not believe in Jesus they are lost." He arose and prayed. After praying he still felt contention in his spirit. His old nature said, "I cannot do it," but the Holy Spirit seemed to say, "Leave them not without warning." At last he thought of a device, and prayed God to accept it; he wrote upon a diamond-shaped pane of glass in the window with his ring these words:—"One thing thou lackest." He could not bring himself to speak to them, but went his way with many a prayer for their conversion. He had no sooner gone than the good woman of the house, who was a great admirer of him, said, "I will go up to his room: I like to look at the very place where the man of God has been." She went up and noticed on the window-pane those words, "One thing thou lackest." It struck her with conviction in a moment. "Ah!" said she, "I thought he did not care much about us, for I knew he always pleaded with those with whom he stopped, and when I found that he did not do so with us, I thought we had vexed him: but I see how it was; he was too tender in mind to speak to us." She called her daughters up. "Look there, girls!" said she, "see what Mr. Whitefield has written on the window! 'One thing thou lackest.' Call up your father." And the father came up and read that too, "One thing thou lackest!" and around the bed whereon the man of God had slept they all knelt down and sought that God would give them the one thing they lacked, and ere they left that chamber they had found that one thing, and the whole household rejoiced in Jesus.

It is not long ago since I met with a friend, one of whose church members preserves that very pane of glass in her family as an heirloom. Now, if you cannot admonish and warn in one way, do it in another: but take care to clear your soul of the blood of your relatives and friends, so that it may never crimson your skirts and accuse you before God's bar. So live and so speak and teach, by

some means or other, that you shall have been faithful to God and faithful to the souls of men.

Earnestness often gives prudence, and puts a man in the possession of tact, if not of talent. Andrew used what ability he had. If he had been as some young men are of my acquaintance, he would have said, "I should like to serve God. How I should like to preach! And I should require a large congregation." Well, there is a pulpit in every street in London, there is a most wide and effectual door for preaching in this great city of ours beneath God's blue sky. But this young zealot would rather prefer an easier berth than the open air; and because he is not invited to the largest pulpits, does nothing. How much better it would be if, like Andrew, he began to use the ability he had among those who are accessible to him, and from that stepped to something else, and from that to something else, advancing year by year! If Andrew had not been the means of converting his brother, the probabilities are that he never would have been an apostle. Christ had some reason in the choice of His apostles to their office, and perhaps the ground of His choice of Andrew as an apostle was this: "He is an earnest man," said He, "he brought me Simon Peter; he is always speaking privately to individuals; I will make an apostle of him." Young men, if you become diligent in tract distribution, diligent in the Sunday-school, you are likely men to be made into ministers; but if you stop and do nothing until you can do everything, you will remain useless—an impediment to the Church instead of being a help to her. Dear sisters in Jesus Christ, you must none of you dream that you are in a position in which you can do nothing at all. That were such a mistake in providence as God cannot commit. You must have some talent entrusted to you, and something given you to do which no one else can do. Find out, then, what your sphere is, and occupy it. Ask God to tell you what is your niche, and stand in it, occupying the place till Jesus Christ shall come and give you your reward. Use what ability you have, and use it at once.

Andrew proved his wisdom in that he set great store by a single soul. He bent all his efforts at first upon one man. Afterwards, Andrew, through the Holy Spirit, was made useful to scores, but he began with one. What a task for the arithmetician, to value one soul! One soul sets all heaven's bells ringing by its repentance. One sinner that repenteth maketh angels rejoice. What if you spend a whole life pleading and labouring for the conversion of that one child? If you win that pearl it shall pay you your life worth. Be not therefore dull and discouraged because your class declines in numbers, or because the mass of those with whom you labour reject your testimony. If a man could earn but one in a day he might be satisfied. "One what?" saith one. I meant not one penny, but one thousand pounds. "Ah," say you, "that would be an immense reward." So if you earn but one soul you must reckon what that one is; it is one for numeration, but for value it exceeds all that earth could show. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul? and what loss would it be to you, if you did lose all the world, and gained your soul, and God made you useful in the gaining of the souls of others? Be content, and labour in your sphere, even if it be small, and you will be wise.

You may imitate Andrew in not going far afield to do good. Many Christians do all the good they can five miles off from their own house, when the time they take to go there and back might be well spent in the vineyard at home. I do not think it would be a wise regulation of the parochial authorities if they required the inhabitants of St. Mary, Newington, to remove the snow from the pavement of St. Pancras, and the inhabitants of St. Pancras to keep clean the pavement of St. Mary, Newington. It is best and most convenient that each householder should sweep before his own door; so it is our duty to do, as believers, all the good we can in the place where God has

been pleased to locate us, and especially in our own households. If every man has a claim upon me, much more my own offspring. If every woman has some demand upon me as to her soul, so far as my ability goes, much more such as are of my own flesh and blood. Piety must begin at home as well as charity. Conversion should begin with those who are nearest to us in ties of relationship. I stir you up, not to be attempting missionary labours for India, not to be casting eyes of pity across to Africa, not to be occupied so much with tears for popish and heathen lands, as for your own children, your own flesh and blood, your own neighbours, your own acquaintance. Lift up your cry to heaven for them, and then afterwards you shall preach among the nations. Andrew goes to Cappadocia in his after-life, but he begins with his brother; and you shall labour where you please in years to come, but first of all your own household, first of all those who are under your own shadow must receive your guardian care. Be wise in this thing; use the ability you have, and use it amongst those who are near at hand.

Perhaps somebody will be saying, "How did Andrew persuade Simon Peter to come to Christ?" He did so, first, by narrating his own personal experience: he said, "We have found the Messiah." What you have experienced of Christ tell to others. He did so next by intelligently explaining to him what it was he had found. He did not say he had found some one who had impressed him, but he knew not who he was; he told him he had found the Messiah, that is, Christ. Be clear in your knowledge of the gospel and your experience of it, and then tell the good news to those whose soul you seek. Andrew had power over Peter because of his own decided conviction. He did not say, "I hope I have found Christ," but, "I have found him." He was sure of that. Get full assurance of your own salvation. There is no weapon like it. He that speaks doubtingly of what he would convince another, asks that other to doubt his testimony. Be positive in your experience and your assurance, for this will help you.

Andrew had power over Peter because he put the good news before him in an earnest fashion. He did not say to him, as though it were a commonplace fact, "The Messiah has come," but no, he communicated it to him as the most weighty of all messages with becoming tones and gestures, I doubt not, "We have found the Messiah, which is called Christ." To your own kinsfolk tell your belief, your enjoyments, and your assurance, tell all judiciously, with assurance of the truth of it, and who can tell whether God may not bless your work?

Andrew won a soul, won his brother's soul, won such a treasure! He won no other than that Simon, who at the first cast of the gospel net, when Christ had made him a soul-fisherman, caught three thousand souls at a single haul! Peter, a very prince in the Christian Church, one of the mightiest of the servants of the Lord in all his usefulness, would be a comfort to Andrew. I should not wonder but what Andrew would say in days of doubt and fear, "Blessed be God that He has made Peter so useful! Blessed be God that ever I spoke to Peter! What I cannot do, Peter will help to do; and while I sit down in my helplessness, I can feel thankful that my dear brother Peter is honoured in bringing souls to Christ." Your fingers are yet to wake to ecstasy the living lyre of a heart that up till now has not been tuned to the praise of Christ; you are to kindle the fire which shall light up a sacred sacrifice of a consecrated life to Christ. Only be up and doing for the Lord Jesus, be importunate and prayerful, be zealous and self-sacrificing. I make no doubt of it, that, when we have proved our God by prayer, He will pour down such a blessing that we shall not have room to receive it.

Chapter 2: Angels Visit Sodom

Angels Visit Sodom

EVERY believer should be an ambassador from heaven. "As My Father hath sent Me," said the Well-beloved, "even so send I you." You are sent to gather together the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, like your Master, to seek and to save that which is lost. I speak solemnly to you who have wept over Jerusalem, and who are proving your true love to souls by your exertions for them, and I remind you that it is a glorious work to seek to save men, and that for its sake you should be willing to put up with the greatest possible inconveniences. The angels never hesitated when they were bidden to go to Sodom. They descended without demur and went about their work without delay. Although the report of Sodom's detestable iniquity had gone up to heaven, and the Lord would bear no longer with that filthy city, yet, from the purity of heaven, the angels did not hesitate to descend to behold the infamy of Sodom; where God sent them, they failed not to go. "There came two angels to Sodom at even." What, angels? Did angels come to Sodom? To Sodom, and yet angels? Ay, and none the less angelic because they came to Sodom, but all the more so, because in unquestioning obedience to their Master's high behests they sought out the elect one and his family, to deliver him and his from impending destruction. However near to Christ you may be, however much your character may be like that of your Lord, you who are called to such service, must never say, "I cannot talk to these people, they are so depraved and debased; I cannot enter that haunt of sin to tell of Jesus; I sicken at the thought; its associations are altogether too revolting to my feelings; but, because you are there wanted, men of God, you must there be found. To whom should the physician go but to the sick, and where can the distributer of the alms of mercy find such a fitting sphere as among those whose spiritual destitution is extreme. Be ye angels of mercy each one of you, and God speed you in your soul-saving work. As ye have received Christ Jesus into your hearts, so imitate Him in your lives. Let the woman that is a sinner receive of your kindness, for Jesus looked on her with mercy; let the man who has been most mad with wickedness be sought after, for Jesus healed demoniacs; let no type of sin, however terrible, be thought by you to be beneath your pity, or beyond your labour, but seek ye out those who have wandered farthest, and snatch from the flame the firebrands which are already smoking in it. When you go to lost souls, you must, as these angels did, tell them plainly their condition and their danger. "Up," said they, "for God will destroy this place." If you really long to save men's souls, you must tell them a great deal of disagreeable truth. The preaching of the wrath of God has come to be sneered at nowadays, and even good people are half-ashamed of it; a maudlin sentimentality about love and goodness has hushed, in great measure, plain gospel expostulations and warnings. But, if we expect souls to be saved, we must declare unflinchingly with all affectionate fidelity, the terrors of the Lord. "Well," said the Scotch lad, when he listened to the minister who told his congregation that there was no hell, or at any rate only a temporary punishment, "Well," said he, "I need not come and hear this man any longer, for if it be as he says, it is all right, and religion is of no consequence, and if it be not as he says, then I must not hear him again, because he will deceive me." "Therefore," says the apostle, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade

men." Let not modern squeamishness prevent plain speaking. Are we to be more gentle than the apostles? Shall we be wiser than the inspired preachers of the word? Until we feel our minds overshadowed with the dread thought of the sinner's doom we are not in a fit frame for preaching to the unconverted. We shall never persuade men if we are afraid to speak of the judgment and the condemnation of the unrighteous. None so infinitely gracious as our Lord Jesus Christ, yet no preacher ever uttered more faithful words of thunder than He did. It was He who spoke of the place "where their worm dieth not and their fire is not quenched." It was He who said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." It was He who spake the parable concerning that man in hell who longed for a drop of water to cool his tongue. We must be as plain as Christ was, as downright in honesty to the souls of men, or we may be called to account for our treachery at the last. If we flatter our fellows into fond dreams as to the littleness of future punishment, they will eternally detest us for so deluding them, and in the world of woe they will invoke perpetual curses upon us for having prophesied smooth things, and having withheld from them the awful truth. When we have affectionately and plainly told the sinner that the wages of sin will be death, and that woe will come because of his unbelief, we must go farther, and must in the name of our Lord Jesus, exhort the guilty to escape from the deserved destruction. The angels, though they understood that God had elected Lot to be saved, did not omit a single exhortation or leave the work to itself, as though it were to be done by predestination apart from instrumentality. They said, "Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed." How impressive is each admonition! What force and eagerness of love gleams in each entreaty! "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Every word is quick and powerful decisive and to the point. Souls want much earnest expostulation and affectionate exhortation to constrain them to escape from their own ruin. Were they wise, the bare information of their danger would be enough, and the prospect of a happy escape would be sufficient; but they, as they are utterly unwise, as you and I know, for we were once such as they are, they must be urged, persuaded, and entreated to look to the Crucified that they may be saved. We should never have come to Christ unless divine constraint had been laid upon us, neither will they; that constraint usually comes by instrumentality; let us seek to be such instruments. If it had not been for earnest voices that spoke to us, and earnest teachers that beckoned us to come to the cross, we had never come. Let us therefore repay the debt we owe to the Church of God, and seek as much as lieth in us to do unto others as God in His mercy hath done to us. Be active to persuade men with all your powers of reasoning and argument, salting the whole with tears of affection. Do not let any doctrinal notions stand in the way of the freest persuading when you are dealing with the minds of men, for sound doctrine is perfectly reconcilable therewith.

I recollect great complaint being made against a sermon of mine, "Compel them to come in," in which I spake with much tenderness for souls. That sermon was said to be Arminian and unsound. It is a small matter to me to be judged of men's judgment, for my Master set His seal on that message; I never preached a sermon by which so many souls were won to God, as our church meetings can testify; and all over the world, where the sermon has been scattered, sinners have been saved through its instrumentality, and, therefore, if it be vile to exhort sinners, I purpose to be viler still. I am as firm a believer in the doctrines of grace as any man living, and a true Calvinist after the order of John Calvin himself; but if it be thought an evil thing to bid the sinner lay hold on eternal life, I will be yet more evil in this respect, and herein imitate my Lord and His apostles, who,

though they taught that salvation is of grace, and grace alone, feared not to speak to men as rational beings and responsible agents, and bid them "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Cling to the great truth of electing love and divine sovereignty, but let not these bind you in fetters when, in the power of the Holy Ghost, you become fishers of men. Where words suffice not, as they frequently will not, you must adopt other modes of pressure. The angel took them by the hand. I have much faith under God in close dealings with men; personal entreaties, by the power of the Holy Spirit, do wonders. To grasp a man's hand while you speak with him may be wise and helpful, for sometimes, if you can get one by the hand and show your anxiety by pleading with him, God will bless it. It is well to cast your words, as men drop pebbles into a well, right down into the depth of the soul, quietly, solemnly, when the man is alone. Often is such a means effectual where the preacher with his sermon has laboured in vain. If you cannot win men by words, you must say to yourself, "What can I do?" and go to the Lord with the same enquiry. By the pertinacity of your earnestness you must trouble them into thoughtfulness. As by continual coming the woman wearied the unjust judge, so do you by your continual anxiety and perseverance weary them in their sins till they will fain give you a little heed in order, if possible, to be rid of you, if for nothing else. If you cannot reach them because they will not read the Bible, yet you can thrust a good book in their way, which may say to them what you cannot say; you can write them a letter, short but earnest, and tell them how you feel; you can continue in prayer for them; you can stir up the arm of God, and beseech the Most High to come to the rescue. There have been cases in which, when everything else has failed, a tear, a tear of disappointed love, has done the work. I think it was Mr. Knill who, one day, when distributing tracts amongst the soldiers, was met by a man who cursed him, and said to his fellow soldiers, "Make a ring round him, and I will stop his tract distributing once for all," and then he uttered such fearful oaths and curses that Knill, who could not escape, burst into a flood of tears. Years afterwards, when he was preaching in the streets, a grenadier came up, and said, "Mr. Knill, do you know me?" "No, I do not," said he, "I don't know that I ever saw you." "Do you recollect the soldier who said, 'Make a ring round him and stop his tract-distributing,' and do you recollect what you did?" "No, I do not." "Why, you broke into tears, and when I got home those tears melted my heart, for I saw you were so in earnest, that I felt ashamed of myself, and now I preach myself that same Jesus whom once I despised." Oh that you might have such a strong love for perishing sinners that you will put up with their rebuffs and rebukes, and say to them, "Strike me if you will, but hear me; ridicule me, but still I will plead with you; cast me under your feet as though I were the off-scouring of all things, but at any rate, I will not let you perish, if it be in my power to warn you of your danger."

We ought to remember that we are the messengers of God's mercy to the sons of men. "The Lord being merciful unto him." The angels had not come to Lot of themselves; they were the embodiment and outward display of God's mercy. Christians in the world should view themselves as manifestations of God's mercy to sinners, instruments of grace, servants of the Holy Spirit. Now mercy is a nimble attribute. Justice lingers; it is shod with lead, but the feet of mercy are winged. Mercy delights to perform its office. So should it be with us a delight to do good to men. God can save men without instruments, but He very seldom does it. His usual rule is to work by means. Oh that the mercy of God would work mightily by us! Let us remember, as we mingle with society, that God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. If angels were sent upon this ministry, surely they would be incessantly active; they would fly with all their might from place to place to do

the Lord's will; shall we who are honoured in this be less active than they? As much as lieth in us, let us redeem the time, because the days are evil; let us be instant in season and out of season, let us sow beside all waters, and let it be our earnest endeavour to make full proof of our service, whatever that service may be, that at last it may be said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

Chapter 3: Workers Who Are Successful

Workers Who Are Successful

"HOW is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not amongst us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country' and, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe? We are weak, but we are not weaker than the first disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth: fishermen, the most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability—their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were rent in sunder by wild beasts; but in all these things they were more than conquerors through Him that loved them. The primitive Church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy; and so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savour of Jesus Christ's name; our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of His grace shall be displayed. Keep together, keep close to Christ; close up your ranks. Heed the battle cry; hold fast the faith; quit yourselves like men in the conflict, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King Himself lead us onward to the fray, and we shall not fear the result.

If we pant to see the Word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can avail without the operation of the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God giveth the increase. We must never begin our catalogue of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the Church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, nothing successful.

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove, With all Thy quickening powers."

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for Thy power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon Thee we go forward in confidence.

I have been struck lately, in looking through the history of the Reformation and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching about the gospel, but preaching the gospel. So it was with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, as a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might

be sure that he was about to preach "Through grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And it was the same with Luther. Luther's preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are ye saved, and by faith alone." They spake this, and they spake it again; neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they laboured with all their might, so to speak, that the ploughman at the plough-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence; of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He that believeth hath everlasting life"; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." If we are to see the Church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

We must have not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday-school teachers must teach this same gospel. A certain denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be! And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and they would have fought earnestly for them, but in the schoolroom they have twaddled to the little children in this kind of way—"Be good boys and girls; keep the Sabbath;" do not buy sweets on a Sunday; mind your fathers and your mothers; be good, and you will go to heaven"—which is not true, and is not the gospel; for the same gospel is for little children as for grown-up men—not "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. Teachers must inculcate the gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes; the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, for without this no great thing will be done. And if we would see the gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we must have much holy living to back it all up. After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people that attend there? What about the church-members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters? "People will be sure to enquire this, and if the report of our character be bad, it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being well skilled in his art; and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands.

Yet all this would not suffice unless we add individual personal exertion. According to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere; every member of the Church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered not to the ministers, but delivered to the saints, to every one of them, that they might maintain it and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them.

Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valour and of indomitable courage; they had carried everything before them, and subdued province after province for their king. But on a sudden they said in the

council-chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down fifty of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms, who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stop at home? We should be much more at our ease; our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armour be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done." Now, the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, no one could doubt it; to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our pennons are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some twelve or fifteen of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight, and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp; but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armour once again, and go to the battle, and so victory returned. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, and that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done Upon earth even as it is in heaven.

Chapter 4: Giants and Dwarfs

Giants And Dwarfs

IT is needful, whenever any holy enterprise is commenced, that it should be early watered by the helpful Spirit of God. Nothing beginneth well unless it beginneth in God. It cannot take root, it cannot spring up in hopefulness, except the Holy Spirit shall descend upon it; it will wither like the grass upon the housetops if the celestial dew of the morning fall not early upon it. The like grace is equally needful after years of growth; there is urgent need of the latter rain, the shower of revival, in which the old work shall be freshened, and the first verdure shall be restored; for without this latter rain, the period of harvest, which is the end aimed at, will be disappointing. The same is true in connection with any sphere of labour in which any individual may happen to be engaged. I will trust that every believer has found something to do for his Lord and Master. In commencing any Christian work, novelty greatly assists enthusiasm, and it is very natural that under first impulses the beginner should achieve an easy success. The difficulty of the Christian is very seldom the commencement of the work; the true labour lies in the perseverance which alone can win the victory. Christians who have now been for years occupied with a service which the Holy Ghost laid upon them, I would remind of the early rain of their youthful labours, the moisture of which still lingereth on their memories, although it has been succeeded by long years of drought. Be encouraged; a latter rain is yet possible. Seek it. That ye need it so much is a cause for sorrow, but if you really feel your need of it, be glad that the Lord worketh in you such sacred desires. If you did not feel a need for more grace, it would be a reason for alarm; but to be conscious that all that God did by you in the past has not qualified you to do anything without Him now, to feel that you lean entirely upon His strength now as much as ever, is to be in a condition in which it shall be right and proper for God to bless you abundantly. Wait upon Him, then, for the latter rain; ask that if He has given you a little of blessing in past years, He would return and give you ten times as much now, even now; so that, at the last, if you have sown in tears, you may come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. Alas; the danger of every Christian worker is that of falling into routine and self-sufficiency. We are most apt to do what we have been accustomed to do, and to do it half asleep. One of the hardest tasks in all the world is to keep the Christian awake on the Enchanted Ground. The tendencies of this present time, and of all times, are soporific. The life, the power of our public services and private devotion speedily evaporates; we pray as in a dream, and praise and preach like somnambulists. May God be pleased to stir us up, to awaken and quicken us, by sending us the latter rain to refresh his weary heritage.

We have in this age but few giants in grace who rise head and shoulders above the common height, men to lead us on in deeds of heroism and efforts of unstaggering faith. After all, the work of the Christian Church, though it must be done by all, often owes its being done to single individuals of remarkable grace. In this degenerate time we are very much as Israel was in the days of the Judges, for there are raised up among us leaders who judge Israel, and are the terror of her foes. Oh, if the Church had in her midst a race of heroes; if our missionary operations could be attended with the holy chivalry which marked the Church in the early days; if we could have

back apostles and martyrs, or even such as Carey and Judson, what wonders would be wrought! We have fallen upon a race of dwarfs, and are content, to a great extent, to have it so.

There was once in London a club of small men, whose qualification for membership lay in their not exceeding five] feet in height; these dwarfs held, or pretended to hold, the opinion that they were nearer the perfection of manhood than others, for they argued that primeval men had been far more gigantic than the present race, and consequently the way of progress was to grow less and less, and that the human race as it perfected itself would become as diminutive as themselves. Such a club of Christians might be established in London, and without any difficulty might attain to an enormously numerous membership; for the notion is common that our dwarfish Christianity is after all the standard, and many even imagine that nobler Christians are enthusiasts, fanatical, and hot-blooded; while we are cool because we are wise, and indifferent, because intelligent. We must get rid of all this nonsense. The fact is, the most of us are vastly inferior to the early Christians, who, as I take it, were persecuted because they were thoroughly Christians, and we are not persecuted because we hardly are Christians at all. They were so earnest in the propagation of the Redeemer's kingdom, that they became the nuisance of the age in which they lived. They would not let errors alone. They had not conceived the opinion that they were to hold the truth, and leave other people to hold error without trying to intrude their opinions upon them, but they preached Christ Jesus right and left, and delivered their testimony against every sin. They denounced the idols, and cried out against superstition, until the world, fearful of being turned upside down, demanded of them, "Is that what you mean? Then we will burn you, lock you up in prison, and exterminate you." To which the Church replied, "We will accept the challenge, and will not depart from our resolve to conquer the world for Christ." At last the fire in the Christian Church burned out the persecution of an ungodly world. But we are so gentle and quiet, we do not use strong language about other people's opinions; but let men go to hell out of charity to them. We are not at all fanatical, and for all we do to disturb him, the old manslayer has a very comfortable time of it. We would not wish to save any sinner who does not particularly wish to be saved. We shall be pleased to say a word to them in a mild way, but we do not speak with tears streaming down our cheeks, groaning and agonising with God for them; neither would we thrust our opinions upon them, though we know they are being lost for want of the knowledge of Christ crucified. May God send the latter rain to His Church, to me, and to you, and may we begin to bestir ourselves, and seek after the highest form of earnestness for the kingdom of King Jesus. May the days come in which we shall no longer have to complain that we sow much and reap little, but may we receive a hundredfold reward, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Very feebly, but still with the most earnest intentions, I have endeavoured to excite in you an ambition after a higher life, and the setting up of a higher standard. Seek to love your Master more; pray to be filled with His Spirit. Do not be mere tradespeople who are Christianised, but be Christians everywhere; not plated goods, but solid metal. Be ye servants of Jesus Christ, whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do. Serve Him with both your hands, and all your heart. Get your manhood strung to the utmost tension, and throw its whole force into your Redeemer's service. Live while you live. Drive not away your existence upon baser ends, but count the glory of Christ to be the only object worthy of your manhood's strength, the spread of the truth the only pursuit worthy of your mental powers. Spend and be spent in your Master's service.

Chapter 5: Obedience

Obedience THE path of obedience is generally a middle path. "Turn not from it, to the right hand or to the left."

There is sure to be a right hand, there is sure to be a left hand, and both are probably wrong. There will be extremes on either side. I believe that this is true in ten thousand things in ordinary life, and also true in spiritual things in very many respects. The path of truth in doctrine is generally a middle one. There are certain tremendous truths, such as divine sovereignty, the doctrine of election, covenant transactions, and so forth; and some men cast such a loving eye upon these truths that they desire to be, and are, quite blind to all other truths besides. These great and precious doctrines take up the whole field of their vision, and another and equally valuable part of God's Word is either left unread, or else twisted round into some supposed reconciliation with the first-named truths. Then, again, there are others who think much of man. They have deep sympathy with the human race. They see man's sin and ruin, and they are much charmed with the mercy of God and the invitations of the gospel which are given to sinners, and they become so entranced with these truths in connection with the responsibility of man, and man's free agency, that they will see nothing else, and declare all other doctrines, except these, to be delusions. If they admit the doctrines of grace to be true, they think them valueless, but they generally consider them to be untrue altogether. It seems to me that the path of truth is to believe them both; to hold firmly that salvation is by grace, and to hold with equal firmness that the ruin of any man is wholly and entirely his own fault; to maintain the sovereignty of God, and to hold the responsibility of man also; to believe in the free agency of both God and man; neither to dishonour God by making Him a lacquey to His creatures' will, nor, on the other hand, to rid man of all responsibility, by making him to be a mere log or a machine. Take all that is in the Bible to be true. Never be afraid of any text that is written by the sacred pen. When you turn the pages over, I do hope you never feel as if you wish that any verse could be altered, I trust you never desire that any text might be amended so as to read a little more Calvinistic, or a little more like the teaching of Arminius. Always stand to it that your creed must bend to the Bible, and not the Bible to your creed, and dare to be a little inconsistent with yourselves, if need be, sooner than be inconsistent with God's revealed truth. With regard to our words; the course of speech generally is, on the one hand to say too much, or on the other hand to say too little; to be silent when the wicked are before us, or else to be rash with our lips and betray a good cause through our rashness in defending it. There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent, and he that judgeth well will mark his opportunities and take the middle course. He will neither be garrulous with advice that is not required, nor will he be cowardly and dumb when he ought to bear testimony for his Master. The same holds good with regard to zeal.

Neither to the right hand nor to the left must the Christian turn, with regard to the reliance of his soul, in the matter of his eternal salvation. "None but Jesus" must be the constant watchword of our spirit. Some will call us in this direction, and some in that. The wrecker's beacons would entice us upon the rocks in a thousand directions, but let us steer by the sun or by the pole-star, and not

trust to the treacherous guides of human fancy. Keep close to this, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous." So in the matter of faith itself let us keep the middle place. Let us not be as some are—presumptuous, and refusing to examine themselves, declaring that they must be right Let us remember that

"He who never doubted of his state, He may—perhaps he may too late."

Let us not fall, on the other side, into constant doubting, imagining that we never can be fully assured, but must always be raising the question—

"'Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought; Do I love the Lord or no?

Am I His, or am I not?"

Let us ask God to guide us into the middle path, wherein we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day"; careful, watchful, prayerful, as much as if our salvation depended upon our own vigilance; relying upon the sure promise, and the immutable oath, knowing that we stand in Christ, and not in ourselves, and are kept by the mighty God of Jacob, and not by any power of our own. This middle path, wherein we turn not to the right hand of presumption, nor to the left hand of unbelief, is the path which God would have us tread. This rule, too, for I might continue to apply it in scores of ways, will also hold good with you in your daily life in the matter of your general cheerfulness or otherwise. Some people never smile. Dear souls! They pull the blinds down on Sunday. They are sorry that the flowers are so beautiful, and think that they ought to have been whitewashed; they almost believe that if the garden beds were of a little more serious colour it would be advisable.

Let no man be deceived with the idea that if he carries out the right, by God's grace he will prosper in this world as the consequence. It is very likely that, for a time at least, his conscientiousness will stand in the way of his prosperity. God does not invariably make the doing of the right to be the means of pecuniary gain to us. On the contrary, it frequently happens that for a time men are great losers by their obedience to Christ. But the Scripture always speaks as to the long run; it sums up the whole of life—there it promises true riches. If thou wouldst prosper, keep close to the Word of God, and to thy conscience, and thou shalt have the best prosperity. Thou wilt not see it in a week, nor a month, nor a year, but thou shalt enjoy it ere long. Hundreds have I seen, and I speak within bounds when I speak of that number, who in different times of dilemma have waited upon me, and asked my advice as to what they should do. I have almost always noticed that those persons who temporise, or attempt to find out a policy of going between, and doing as little wrong as possible, but still just a little, always blunder out of one ditch into another, and their whole life is a life of compromises, of sins, and of miseries; if they do get to heaven they go there slipshod, and with thorns piercing their feet all the way. But I have noticed others who have come right straight out, and rent away the cords which entangled them, and they have said, "I will do the right, if I die for it"; and though they have had to suffer (I could mention some cases where they have suffered for years, very much to the sorrow of him who gave them the advice upon which they acted, not because he regretted giving them the advice, but regretted that they had to suffer), yet always there has been a turn somewhere or other, and by-and-by they have had to say, "I thank God, after all, notwithstanding all my crosses and losses, that I was led to be faithful to my convictions,

for I am a happier man, if not a richer man." In some cases they have absolutely been richer men, for after all, even in this world, "honesty is the best policy." It is a very low way of looking at it, but right and righteousness do in the end, in the long run, get the respect and the esteem of men. The thief, though he takes a short way to get rich, yet takes such a dangerous way that it does not pay; but he who walks straight along the narrow road shall find it to be the shortest way to the best kind of prosperity, both in this world and in that which is to come.

One good brother, whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose, said, on one occasion, that when he went up the Rhine, he never looked at the rocks, or the old castles, or the flowing river, he was so taken up with other things! Why, to me, nature is a looking-glass in which I see the face of God. I delight to gaze abroad, and

"Look through nature up to nature's God."

But that was all unholiness to him. I confess I do not understand that kind of thing; I have no sympathy with those who look upon this material world as though it were a very wicked place, and as if there were here no trace whatever of the Divine hand, and no proofs of the Divine wisdom, nor manifestations of the Divine care. I think we may delight ourselves in the works of God, and find much pleasure therein, and get much advanced towards God Himself by considering His works. That to which I have thus referred is one extreme. There are others who are all froth and levity, who profess to be Christians, and yet cannot live without the same amusements as worldlings; must be now at this party, and then at that; never comfortable unless they are making jokes, and following after all the levities and frivolities of the world. Ah! the first is a pardonable weakness, in which there is much that is commendable, but this is a detestable one, of which I can say nothing that is good. The Christian, I think, should steer between the two. He should be cheerful. but not frivolous. He should be sustained and happy under all circumstances; have a friendly and a kindly word for all, and be a man among men as the Saviour was, willing to sit at the banquet, and to feast and rejoice with those that do rejoice; but still heavenly-minded in it all, feeling that a joy in which he cannot have Christ with him is no joy, and that places of amusement where he cannot take his Lord with him are no places of amusement, but scenes of misery to him. He should be constantly cheerful, happy, and rejoicing, and yet at the same time he should evince a deep solemnity of spirit which removes far from him everything that is sacrilegiously light and trifling. By the same rule, arrange your business. Some men in business act in such a way that from morning till night they can think of nothing but business. I have had to mourn over some Christians who, when they have had enough, did not know it—when they were doing as much as they could do with health to their souls, and had no more need of gain, yet they must needs launch out into something else that would take away all opportunities of serving God's cause, and all time for reflection and thought, and that would thus bring barrenness and leanness into their souls. Others we have to complain of, who do not work enough at their callings. They are at a sermon when they ought to be behind the counter, or they are enjoying a prayer-meeting when they ought to be mending their husbands' stockings. They go out preaching in the villages when they had better be earning money to pay their creditors. There are extremes, but the true Christian is diligent in business, and is also fervent in spirit, seeking to combine the two. The believer would be like one of old, "a just man and devout," not having one duty smeared with the blood of another duty.

Chapter 6: "Only Be Thou Strong and Very Courageous"

"Only Be Thou Strong And Very Courageous"

JOSHUA was very highly favoured in the matter of promises. The promises given him by God were broadly comprehensive and exceedingly encouraging. But Joshua was not therefore to say within himself, "These covenant engagements will surely be fulfilled, and I may therefore sit still and do nothing." On the contrary, because God had decreed that the land should be conquered, Joshua was to be diligent to lead the people onward to battle. He was not to use the promise as a couch upon which his indolence might luxuriate, but as a girdle wherewith to gird up his loins for future activity. As a spur to energy, let us always regard the gracious promises of our God. We should sin against Him most ungratefully and detestably were we to say within ourselves, "God will not desert His people; therefore let us venture into sin"; and we are almost equally wicked if we whisper in our minds, "God will assuredly fulfil His own decrees, and give the souls of His redeemed as a reward to His Son Jesus, therefore let us do nothing, and refrain altogether from zealous Christian service." This is not proper language for true children. This is the talk of the indolently ignorant, or of mere pretenders, who do but mock God while they pretend to reverence His decrees. By the oath, by the promise, by the covenant, and by the blood which sealeth it, we are exhorted continually to be at work for Christ, since we are saved in order that we may serve Him, in the power of the Holy Ghost, with heart, and soul, and strength.

Joshua was especially exhorted to continue in the path of obedience. He was the captain, but there was a great Commander-in-Chief who gave him his marching orders. Joshua was not left to his own fallible judgment, or fickle fancy, but he was to do according to all that was written in the book of the law. So is it with us who are believers. We are not under the law, but under grace; yet still there is a gospel rule which we are bound to follow, and the law in the hand of Christ is a delightful rule of life to the believer.

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee." You supposed when you heard the words, "Only be thou strong and very courageous," that some great exploit was to be performed, and the supposition was correct, for all exploits are comprehended in that one declaration, "That thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee." The highest exploit of the Christian life is to obey Christ. This is such an exploit as shall never be performed by any man, except he has learned the rule of faith, has been led to rest upon Christ, and to advance upon the path of obedience in a strength which is not his own, but which he has received from the work of the indwelling Holy Ghost. The world counts obedience to be a mean-spirited thing, and speaks of rebellion as freedom. We have heard men say, "I will be my own master; I shall follow my own will." To be a free-thinker and a free-liver seems to be the worldling's glory, and yet if the world could but have sense enough to convict itself of folly, upon indisputable proof being afforded it, it were not difficult to prove that a reviler of the obedient is a fool. Take the world's own martial rule. Who is accounted to be the boldest and the best soldier but

the man who is most thoroughly obedient to the captain's command?

There is a story told of the old French wars which has been repeated hundreds of times. A sentinel is set to keep a certain position, and at nightfall, as he is pacing to and fro, the emperor himself comes by. He does not know the pass-word. Straightway the soldier stops him. "You cannot pass," says he. "But I must pass," says the emperor. "No," replies the man, "if you were the little corporal in grey himself you should not go by," by which, of course, he meant the emperor. Thus the autocrat himself was held in check by order. The vigilant soldier was afterwards handsomely rewarded, and all the world said that he was a brave fellow. Now, from that instance, and there are hundreds of such which are always told with approbation, we learn that obedience to superior commands, carried out at all hazards, is one of the highest proofs of courage that a man can possibly give; to this the world itself gives its assent. Then surely it is not a mean and sneaking thing for a man to be obedient to Him who is the Commander-in-chief of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He who would do the right and the true thing in cold blood in the teeth of ridicule, is a bolder man than he who flings himself before the cannon's mouth for fame; ay, and let me add, to persist in scrupulous obedience throughout life may need more courage than even the martyr evinces when once for all he gives himself to burn at the stake. In Joshua's case, full obedience to the divine command involved innumerable difficulties. The command to him was, that he should conquer the whole of the land for the favoured tribes, and to the best of his ability he did it; but he had to besiege cities which were walled up to heaven, and to fight with monarchs whose warriors came to battle in chariots of iron, armed with scythes. The first conflicts were something terrible. If he had not been a bold and able soldier, he would have put up his sword and desisted from the strife; but the spirit of obedience sustained him. Though you and I have no Hivites and Jebusites to kill, no cities to pull down, no chariots of iron to encounter, yet we shall find it no easy thing to keep to the path of Christian consistency.

Moreover, Joshua had not only difficulties to meet with, but he made a great many enemies through his obedience. This was naturally so. As soon as it was known that Jericho had been taken, that Ai had been carried by assault, then we read of first one confederation of kings, and then of another, their object being to destroy the power of Joshua, since these kings well knew that he would crush them if they did not crush him. Now, the Christian man is in a like plight. He will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objects to make none; but, on the other hand, if to do the right, and to believe the true, and to carry out the honest, should make him lose every earthly friend, he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in heaven will be yet more friendly and reveal Himself to him more graciously than ever.

Joshua, in his obedience, needed much courage, because he had undertaken a task which involved, if he carried it out, long years of perseverance. After he had captured one city, he must go on to attack the next fortress. The days were not long enough for his battles. He bids the sun stand still, and the moon is stayed; and even when that long day has passed, yet the morning sees him sword in hand still. Joshua was like one of those old knights who slept in their armour. He was always fighting. His sword must have been well hacked, and often must his armour have been blood-red. He had before him a life-long enterprise. Such is the life of the Christian, a warfare from end to end. As soon as you are washed in Christ's blood and clothed in His righteousness, you must begin to hew your way through a lane of enemies, right up to the eternal throne. Every foot of the way will be disputed; not an inch will Satan yield to you. You must continue daily to fight. "He

that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved"; not the beginner who commences in his own strength, and soon comes to an end, but he who, girt about with divine grace, with the Spirit of God within him, determines to hold on till he has smitten the last foe, and never leaves the battlefield till he has heard the word, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Let the man who says that the Christian's life is mean, and devoid of manliness, let him go and learn wisdom before he speaketh; for of all men the persevering believer is the most manly. Thou who boastest of thyself, of thy courage in sinning, thou yieldest to the foe; thou art a cringing cur; thou turnest tail upon the enemy; thou courtest the friendship of the world; thou hast not courage enough to dare to do the right and the true; thou hast past under the yoke of Satan and thine own passions, and to conceal thine own cowardice thou art base enough to call the brave Christian man a coward. Out on thee, for adding lying to thine other vices!

Oftentimes, if we follow Christ we shall need to be brave indeed in facing the world's customs. You will find it so, young man, in a mercantile house. You will find it so, husband, even in connection with your own wife and children, if they are unsaved. Children have found this so in the school. Traders find it so in the market-place. He that would be a true Christian had need wear a stout heart. There is a story told of Dr. Adam Clarke, which shows the courage which the youthful Christian sometimes needs. When he was in a shop in the town of Coleraine, they were preparing for the annual fair, and some rolls of cloth were being measured. One of them was too short, and the master said, "Come, Adam, you take that end, and I will take the other, and we will soon pull it, and stretch it till it is long enough." But Adam had no hands to do it with, and no ears to hear his master's dishonest order, and at last he flatly refused, whereupon the master said, "You will never make a tradesman; you are good for nothing here; you had better go home, and take to something else." Now, that thing may not be done now, for men do not generally cheat in that open downright kind of way nowadays, but they cheat after more roguish fashions. The records of the Bankruptcy Court will tell you what I mean. Bankruptcies one after another of the same person are doubled-distilled thieving, generally; not old-fashioned thieving like that which once brought men to transportation and to the gallows, but something worse than highway robbery and burglary. The genuine Christian will every now and then have to put his foot down, and say, "No, I cannot, and I will not be mixed up with such a thing as that," and will have to say this to his master, to his father, to his friend, whose respect he desires to gain, and who may be of the greatest possible assistance to him in life. But if it be your duty, my dear brother and sister, thus to do the right, do it if the skies fall. Do it if poverty should stare you in the face. Do it if you should be turned into the streets to-morrow. You shall never be a loser by God in the long run; and if you have to suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are you! Count yourselves to be happy that you have the privilege of making any sacrifice for the sake of conscience, for in these days we have not the power to honour God as they did who went to prison, and to the rack, and to the stake; let us not, therefore, cast aside other opportunities which are given to us of showing how much we love the Lord, and how faithfully we desire to serve Him. Be very courageous to do what the Lord Jesus bids you in all things, and let men judge you to be an idiot if they will, you shall be one of the Lord's champions, a true Knight of the Cross. The world saith, "We must not be too precise." Hypocritical world! The world means that it would be glad to get rid of God's law altogether, but as it scarcely dares to say that point-blank, it cants with the most sickening of all cant, "We must not be too particular, or too nice." As one said to an old Puritan once, "Many people have rent their consciences in halves: could not you just make a little nick in yours?" "No," he said, "I cannot, for

my conscience belongs to God." "We must live, you know," said a money-loving shopkeeper, as his excuse for doing what he could not otherwise defend. "Yes, but we must die," was the reply, "and therefore we must do no such thing." There is no particular necessity for any of us living. We are probably better dead, if we cannot live without doing wrong. The very essence of obedience, I have said, lies in exactness. Probably your child, if sometimes disobedient, would still, as a general rule, do what you told him. It would be in the little things that thorough-going and commendable obedience would appear. Let the world judge of this for itself. Here is an honest man. Do people say of him, "He is such an honest man that he would not steal a horse"? No, that would not prove him to be very honest; but they say, "He would not even take a pin that did not belong to him." That is the world's own description of honesty, and surely when it comes to obedience to God it ought to be the same. Here is a merchant, and he boasts, "I have a clerk, who is such a good accountant that you would not find a mistake of a single penny in six months' reckoning." It would not have meant much if he had said, "You would not find a mistake of ten thousand pounds in six months' reckoning." And yet if a man stands to little things, and is minute and particular, worldlings charge him with being too stringent, too strict, too straitlaced, and I know not what besides; while all the time, according to their own showing, the essence of honesty and of correctness is exactness in little things.

Chapter 7: According To Your Faith

According To Your Faith

NOTHING is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or ten, or twenty penitents converted, and when we have sometimes been heartily thankful that a hundred have been added to the church in a month, ought we ever to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the conversion of a hundred, had it been more earnest, might, in the Divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with gospel truth before this day twelve months. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them. He can find ministers for His truth—ay, if He willed it, among the very offscourings of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth, if He pleases. We are not to look to what we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what He did for the Church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the Devil's army, and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if ere long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the gospel! Who can tell—the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon. Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades, brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes, the mighty works of God? The Lord can find His men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham"; and as He could then, so He can now. Let us not despair. If we will but pray for it, our heavenly Father will deny His children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and according to your faith shall it be done unto you.

There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but, he says, with the sluggard—

"You have woke me too soon, I must slumber again,"

and when he gets up he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is! He is living, but with how little vitality!" Now, you see another man. His sleep is short; he wakes soon; he is out to his business; takes down the shutters; he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that; he is all active; he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected; his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! you are glad to get this second man to be your servant; he is worth ten times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence. And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer

without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go in to business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men; no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ; no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! 'This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians. Would it were not so! On the other hand, we see another kind of man—one that is renewed in the spirit of his mind; though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have wherewith to give bountifully for the spread of the gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master; and whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write, but he will be aiming to do something for Him who has bought him with His precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh! these are the cream of the Church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem.

So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve great work for God; it is the man who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

Chapter 8: The Kind of Labourers Wanted

The Kind Of Labourers Wanted

WHAT kind of men does the Master mean to use? They must be labourers. The man who does not make hard work of his ministry will find it very hard work to answer for his idleness at the last great day. A gentleman who wants an easy life should never think of occupying the Christian pulpit, he is out of place there, and when he gets there the only advice I can give him is to get out of it as soon as possible; and if he will not leave the position voluntarily, I call to mind the language of Jehu concerning Jezebel, "Fling her down," and think the advice applicable to a lazy minister. An idler has no right in the pulpit. He is an instrument of Satan in damning the souls of men. The ministry demands brain labour; the preacher must throw his thought into his teaching, and read and study to keep his mind in good trim. He must not weary the people by telling them the truth in a stale, unprofitable manner, with nothing fresh from his own soul to give force to it. Above all, he must put heart work into his preaching. He must feel what he preaches: it must never be with him an easy thing to deliver a sermon, he must feel as if he could preach his very life away ere the sermon is done. There must be soul work in it, the entire man must be stirred up to effort, the whole nature that God has endowed him with must be concentrated with all its vigour upon the work in hand. Such men we want. To stand and drone out a sermon in a kind of articulate snoring to a people who are somewhere between awake and asleep must be wretched work. I wonder what kind of excuse will be given by some men at last for having habitually done this. To promulgate a dry creed, and go over certain doctrines, and expound and enforce them logically, but never to deal with men's consciences, never to upbraid them for their sins, never to tell them of their danger, never to invite them to a Saviour with tears and entreaties! What a powerless work is this! What will become of such preachers? God have mercy upon them! We want labourers, not loiterers. We need men on fire, and I beseech you ask God to send them. The harvest never can be reaped by men who will not labour; they must off with their coats and go at it in their shirt-sleeves; I mean they must doff their dignities and get to Christ's work as if they meant it, like real harvest men. They must sweat at their work, for nothing in the harvest-field can be done without the sweat of the face, nor in the pulpit without the sweat of the soul. But what kind of labourers are required? They must be men who will go down into the wheat. You cannot reap wheat by standing a dozen yards off and beckoning to it: you must go up close to the standing stalks; every reaper knows that. And you cannot move people's hearts, and bring men to Christ, by imagining yourself to be a superior being, who condescends wonderfully when he shakes hands with a poor man. There is a very genteel order of preaching which is as ridiculous as reaping with a lady's ivory-handled pocket knife, with kid gloves on; and I do not believe in God's ever blessing it. Get among the wheat, like men in earnest! God's servants ought to feel that they are one with the people; whoever they are they should love them, claim kinship with them, feel glad to see them, and look them in the face and say, Brother. Every man is a brother of mine; he may be a very bad one, but for all that I love him, and long to bring him to Jesus. Christ's reapers must get among the wheat.

Now, see what the labourer brings with him. It is a sickle. His communications with the corn are sharp and cutting. He cuts right through, cuts the corn down, and casts it on the ground. The man whom God means to be a labourer in His harvest must not come with soft and delicate words, and flattering doctrines concerning the dignity of human nature, and the excellence of self-help, and of earnest endeavours to rectify our lapsed condition, and the like. Such mealy-mouthedness may God curse, for it is the curse of this age. The honest preacher calls a sin a sin, and a spade a spade, and says to men, "You are ruining yourselves; while you reject Christ you are living on the borders of hell, and ere long you will be lost to all eternity. There shall be no mincing the matter, you must escape from the wrath to come by faith in Jesus, or be driven for ever from God's presence, and from all hope of joy." The preacher must make his sermons cut. He is not to file off the edge of his scythe for fear it should hurt somebody. The gospel is intended to wound the conscience, and to go right through the heart, with the design of separating the soul from sin and self, as the corn is divided from the soil. Our object is to cut the sinner right down, for all the comeliness of the flesh must be slain, all his glory, all his excellence must be withered, and the man must be as one dead ere he can be saved. Ministers who do not aim to cut deep are not worth their salt. God never sent the man who never troubles men's consciences. Such a man may be an ass treading down the corn, but a reaper he certainly is not. We want faithful ministers; pray God to send them. But then a labourer has only begun when he cuts the corn: much more is wanted. As he cuts, he lets the corn fall on to his arm, and then he lays it along in rows, but afterwards he binds it together and makes it into bundles that it may be ingathered. So the labourer whom God sends into the field must be a gathering labourer; he must be one who brings God's people together, who comforts those that mourn, and picks up from the earth those who were cut down by the sharp sickle of conviction. He must bind the saints together, edifying them in their most holy faith.

Remember also that the labourer's work is never done in harvest time till he sees the corn housed,—until it is made into a stack or put into a barn, his toil is not over; and the Christian minister, if God has truly anointed him to His work, never leaves caring for souls till they get to heaven. He is like Mr. Greatheart, with Christiana and Mercy, and the children; he goes with them from the City of Destruction, right up to the River Jordan; and if he could he would go through the river with them. It is his business to march in front with his shield, to meet the dragons and giants with his sword, and protect the little ones. It is his to be tender to them as a shepherd with the lambs and a nurse with her children, for he longs to present them at the last to his Master and say, "Here am I, and the children that Thou hast given me."

We are to pray to the Lord, for it is the Lord's business. Only the Lord can send us the right men. He has a right to send whom He pleases, for it is His own harvest, and a man may employ whom he wills in his own field. It would be all in vain to appeal to anybody else. It is of no use to appeal to bishops to find us labourers. God alone has the making of ministers, and the raising up of true workers, and therefore the petition must be addressed to Him. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest," The Lord's Prayer, in its first three petitions, contains this prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven." Does not that mean, "Lord, send forth men who may teach this world to hallow Thy name, that they through Thy Spirit's power may be the means of making Thy kingdom come, and causing Thy will to be done in earth as it is in heaven." We ought to pray continually to the great Lord of the

harvest for a supply of earnest labourers. And do you notice the expression used here, "that he would send forth labourers." Now, the Greek is much more forcible, it is that He would push them forward, and thrust them out; it is the same word which is used for the expulsion of a devil from a man possessed. It takes great power to drive a devil out, it will need equal power from God to drive a minister out to his work. I always say to young fellows who consult me about the ministry, "Don't be a minister if you can help it;" because, if the man can help it, God never called him, but if he cannot help it, and he must preach or die, then he is the man. May the Lord push men out, thrust them out, drive them out, and compel them to preach the gospel; for unless they preach by a divine compulsion, there will be no spiritual compulsion in their ministry upon the hearts of others. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust out labourers into his harvest." Our Lord said, "into His harvest." I like that, because the harvest is not ours. If that harvest shall perish, it is our heavenly Father's harvest that perishes. This makes it weigh upon my soul. If they told me that the harvest of some harsh, overbearing tyrant was perishing, I might say, "Let it! If he had it, what good would it be to him or anybody else? He grinds the faces of the poor; who wants to see him rich?" But when it is our gracious God, our blessed loving Father, one cannot bear the thought, and yet Jesus puts it before us that it is God's harvest which is perishing for want of reaping. Suppose an angel should take you upon his wing and poise you in mid-space some hundreds of miles above the earth, where you could look down on the globe with strengthened eyesight; suppose you rested there and the world revolved before you in twenty-four hours, the sunlight gradually coming upon all portions of it, and suppose that with the sunlight there should be rendered visible certain colours which would mark where there was grace, where there was idolatry, where there was atheism, where there was popery; you would grieve to see only here and there upon our globe, like little drops of dew, bright marks of the grace of God, but various shades of darkness would show you that the whole world lieth in the Wicked One still. And if the vision changed, and you saw the two hemispheres spread out like a map and transformed into a corn-field with corn all white for the harvest; how sad would you be to see here and there men reaping their little patches, doing the best they can, but the great mass of the corn untouched by the sickle. You would see leagues of land where never an ear was reaped that we know of, from the foundations of the world. You would be grieved to think that God's corn is spoiling, men whom He has made in His own image, and made for immortality, perishing for lack of the gospel. "Pray ye," that is the stress of the whole text—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust forth labourers into his harvest," that these fields may not rot before our eyes.

"But I shall never preach," saith one. If you do not preach you can serve God somehow else. Could you not start a prayer-meeting in your house? Some of you live in different parts of London, could not you commence new interests? Do something for Jesus. Some of you, good women, could you not get young women together and talk to them about the Saviour? Ay, but perhaps some brother has been smothering in his heart a desire to go into the missionary field. Do not quench the Spirit. You may be missing your vocation while trying to suppress that desire. I would sooner you should burst into fanaticism, and become right-down fools in enthusiasm, than remain in a dead coolness, caring little for the souls of men. What do Christian people nowadays think of? If they hear about Japan, they say, "Oh, we shall have a new trade there;" but do they say, "Who among us can go to Japan to tell them of the gospel?" Do you not think that merchants, and soldiers, and sailors, and such-like people who trade with distant parts of the world, are the very persons to spread the gospel? Should not a Christian man say, "I shall try and find a trade for

myself which will bring me into contact with a class of persons that need the gospel, and I will use my trade as the stalking-horse for Christ; since hypocrites use religion as a stalking-horse for gain, I will make my trading subservient to my religion." "Oh," says one, "we can leave that to the society." God bless the society, and, I was going to say, smother the society, rather than allow it to smother personal effort. We want our godly merchants, working men, soldiers, and sailors everywhere to feel, "I cannot go and get a proxy in the shape of a society to do this for me; in the name of God, I will do it myself, and have a share in this great battle." If you cannot labour yourself, the society is the grandest thing conceivable, for you may help others thereby; but still the main cry from Christ is that you yourself should go into the highways and hedges, and as many as you find compel them to come in to the gospel feast.

Chapter 9: A Young Convert and Successful Workers

A Young Convert And Successful Worker

IT has very frequently happened that while men have been sketching out imaginary designs, they have missed actual opportunities. They would not build because they could not erect a palace; they therefore shiver in the winter cold. They would not be clothed in homespun, for they looked for scarlet and fine linen ere long; they were not content to do a little, and therefore did nothing. It is vain for us to be praying for an extensive revival of religion, and comforting each other in the hope of it, if meanwhile we suffer our zeal to effervesce, and sparkle, and then to be dissipated: our proper plan is, with the highest expectations, and with the largest longings, to imitate the woman of whom it is written, "She hath done what she could," by labouring diligently in such holy works as may be within our reach, according to Solomon's precept, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." While believers are zealously doing what God enables them to do, they are in the high road to abundant success; but if they stand all the day idle, gaping after wonders, their spiritual want shall come upon them as an armed man.

Andrew is the picture of what all disciples of Christ should be. To begin, then. This first successful Christian missionary was Himself a sincere follower of Jesus. While so many will wantonly thrust themselves into the offices of Christ's Church, having no concern for the glory of His kingdom, and no part or lot in it, it will be always needful to repeat that warning, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes?" Men who have never seen the beauties of Emmanuel are not fit persons to describe them to others.

Andrew was earnest for the souls of others, though he was but a young convert. He appears to have beheld Jesus as the Lamb of God one day, and to have found out his brother Peter the next. Far be it from us to forbid you who but yesterday found joy and peace, to exert your new-born zeal and youthful ardour. No, delay not, but make haste to spread abroad the good news which is now so fresh and so full of joy to you. It is right that the advanced and the experienced should be left to deal with the captious and the sceptical, but you, even you, young as you are, may find some with whom you can cope: some brother like Simon Peter, some sister dear to you, who will listen to your unvarnished tale, and believe in your simple testimony.

Andrew was a disciple, a new disciple, a commonplace disciple, a man of average capacity. He was not at all the brilliant character that Simon Peter his brother turned out to be. Throughout the life of Jesus Christ Andrew's name occurs, but no notable incident is connected therewith. Though in afterlife he no doubt became a most useful apostle, and according to tradition sealed his life's ministry by death upon a cross, yet at the first Andrew was, as to talent, an ordinary believer, one of that common standard and nothing remarkable. Yet Andrew became a useful minister, and thus it is clear that servants of Jesus Christ are not to excuse themselves from endeavouring to extend the boundaries of His kingdom by saying, "I have no remarkable talent, or singular ability." I very much disagree with those who decry ministers of slender gifts, sneering at them, as though they ought not to occupy the pulpit at all. Are we, after all, as servants of God, to be measured by mere

oratorical ability? Is this after the fashion of Paul, when he renounced the wisdom of words lest the faith of the disciples should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God? If you could blot out from the Christian Church all the minor stars, and leave nothing but those of the first magnitude, the darkness of this poor world would be increased sevenfold. How often the eminent preachers, which are the Church's delight, are brought into the Church by those of less degree, even as Simon Peter was converted by Andrew! Who shall tell what might have become of Simon Peter if it had not been for Andrew? Who shall say that the Church would ever have possessed a Peter if she had closed the mouth of Andrew? And who shall put their finger upon the brother or sister of inferior talent and say, "These must hold their peace"? Nay, if thou hast but one talent, the more zealously use it. God will require it of thee: let not thy brethren hold thee back from putting it out to interest. If thou art but as a glowworm's lamp, hide not thy light, for there is an eye predestinated to see by thy light, a heart ordained to find comfort by thy faint gleam. Shine thou, and the Lord accept thee.

Every single professor of the faith of Christ is bound to do something for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. I would that all, whatever their talents, would be like Andrew in promptness. He is no sooner a convert than he is a missionary; no sooner taught than he begins to teach. I would have them like Andrew, persevering, as well as prompt. He first finds Peter—that is his first success, but how many afterwards he found, who shall tell? Throughout a long life of usefulness it is probable that Andrew brought many stray sheep to the Redeemer's fold, yet certainly that first one would be amongst the dearest to his heart. "He first findeth Peter:" he was the spiritual father of many sons, but he rejoiced most that he was the father of his own brother Peter—his brother in the flesh, but his son in Christ Jesus. The object of the soul-winner is not to bring men to an outward religiousness merely. Little will you have done for a man if you merely make the Sabbath-breaker into a Sabbath-keeper, and leave him a self-righteous Pharisee. Little will you have done for him if you persuade him, having been prayerless, to be a mere user of a form of prayer, his heart not being in it. You do but change the form of sin in which the man lives; you prevent him being drowned in the salt water, but you throw him into the fresh; you take one poison from him, but you expose him to another. The fact is, if you would do real service to Christ, your prayer and your zeal must follow the person who has become the object of your attention, till you bring him absolutely to close with grace and lay hold on Jesus Christ, and accept eternal life as it is found in the atoning sacrifice. Anything short of this may have its usefulness for this world, but must be useless for the world to come. To bring men to Jesus—O, be this your aim—not to bring them to baptism, nor to the meeting-house, but to bring them to His feet who alone can say, "Go in peace; thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee." To bring men to Jesus you can adopt the next means, with most of them, namely, that of instructing them, or putting them in the way of being informed concerning the gospel. It is a very wonderful thing that while to us the light of the gospel is so abundant, it should be so very partially distributed in this country. When I have expounded my own hope in Christ to two or three in a railway carriage, I have found myself telling my listeners perfect novelties. I have seen the look of astonishment upon the face of many an intelligent Englishman when I have explained the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ; persons who have even attended their parish church from their youth up, I have met with, who were totally ignorant of the simple truth of justification by faith; ay, and some who have been to dissenting places of worship do not seem to have laid hold of the fundamental truth that no man is saved by his own doings, but that salvation is procured by faith in the blood and righteousness of

Jesus Christ. This nation is steeped up to the throat in self-righteous doctrine, and the Protestantism of Martin Luther is very generally unknown. The truth is held by as many as God's grace has called, but the great outlying world still talk of doing your best, and then hoping in God's mercy, and I know not what beside of legal self-confidence, while the master-doctrine that he who believes in Jesus is saved by Jesus' finished work, is sneered at as enthusiasm, or attacked as leading to licentiousness. Tell it, then, tell it on all sides, take care that none under your influence shall be left in ignorance of it; I can bear personal witness that the statement of the gospel has often proved in God's hand enough to lead a soul into immediate peace. Not many months ago I met with a lady holding sentiments of almost undiluted popery, and in conversing with her I was delighted to see how interesting and attractive a thing the gospel was to her. She complained that she enjoyed no peace of mind as the result of her religion, and never seemed to have done enough. She had a high idea of priestly absolution, but it had evidently been quite unable to yield repose to her spirit. Death was feared, God was terrible, even Christ an object of awe rather than love. When I told her that whosoever believeth on Jesus is perfectly forgiven, and that I knew I was forgiven—that I was as sure of it as of my own existence; that I feared neither to live nor to die, for it would be the same to me, because God had given me eternal life in His Son, I saw that a new set of thoughts were astonishing her mind. She said, "If I could believe that, I should be the happiest person in the world." I did not deny the inference, but claimed to have proved its truth, and I have reason to believe that the little simple talk we had has not been forgotten. You cannot tell how many may be in bondage for want of the simplest possible instruction upon the plainest truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many, too, may be brought to Christ through your example. Believe me, there is no preaching in this world like the preaching of a holy life. It shames me sometimes, and weakens me in my testimony for my Master, when I recollect that some professors of religion are a disgrace not only to their religion, but even to common morality. It makes me feel as though I must speak with bated breath and trembling knees, when I remember the damnable hypocrisy of those who thrust themselves into the Church of God, and by their abominable sins bring disgrace upon the cause of God and eternal destruction upon themselves. In proportion as a church is holy, in that proportion will its testimony for Christ be powerful. Oh! were the saints immaculate, our testimony would be like fire among the stubble, like the flaming firebrand in the midst of the sheaves of corn. Were the saints of God less like the world, more disinterested, more prayerful, more godlike, the tramp of the armies of Zion would shake the nations, and the day of the victory of Christ would surely dawn.

Chapter 10: "With Good Will Doing Good Service"

"With Good Will Doing Good Service" THE Holy Spirit does not bid us leave our stations in order to serve the Lord. He does not bid us forego the domestic relations which make us husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants; He does not suggest to us to put on a peculiar garb, and seek the seclusion of a hermitage, or the retirement of monastic or conventual life. Nothing of the kind is hinted at, but He bids the servant continue in his or her service—"with good will doing service." Our great Captain would not have you hope to win the victory by leaving your post He would have you abide in your trade, calling, or profession, and all the while serve the Lord in it, doing the will of God from the heart in common things. This is the practical beauty of our holy faith, that when it casts the devil out of a man it sends him home to bless his friends by telling them how great things the Lord has done for him. Grace does not transplant the tree, but bids it overshadow the old house at home as before, and bring forth good fruit where it is. Grace does not make us unearthly, though it makes us unworldly. True religion distinguishes us from others, even as our Lord Jesus was separate from sinners, but it does not shut us up or hedge us round about as if we were too good or too tender for the rough usage of everyday life. It does not put us in the salt-box and shut the lid down, but it casts us in among our fellow-men for their good. Grace makes us the servants of God while still we are the servants of men: it enables us to do the business of heaven while we are attending to the business of earth: it sanctifies the common duties of life by showing us how to perform them in the light of heaven. The love of Christ makes the lowliest acts sublime. As the sunlight brightens a landscape and sheds beauty over the commonest scene, so does the presence of the Lord Jesus. The spirit of consecration renders the offices of domestic servitude as sublime as the worship which is presented upon the sea of glass before the eternal throne, by spirits to whom the courts of heaven are their familiar home.

Whether we are servants or masters, whether we are poor or rich, let us take this as our watchword, "As to the Lord, and not to men." Henceforth may this be the engraving of our seal and the motto of our coat-of-arms; the constant rule of our life, and the sum of our motive. In advocating this gracious aim of our being, let me say that if we are enabled to adopt this motto it will, first of all, influence our work itself; and, secondly, it will elevate our spirit concerning that work. Yet let me add that if the Lord shall really be the all-in-all of our lives, it is after all only what He has a right to expect, and what we are under a thousand obligations to give to Him.

If we do indeed live "as to the Lord," we must needs live wholly to the Lord. The Lord Jesus is a most engrossing Master. He has said, "No man can serve two masters," and we shall find it so. He will have everything or nothing. If, indeed, He be our Lord, He must be sole Sovereign, for He will not brook a rival. It comes to pass, then, O Christian, that you are bound to live for Jesus and for Him alone. You must have no co-ordinate or even secondary object or divided aim: if you do divide your heart, your life will be a failure. As no dog can follow two hares at one time, or he will lose both, certainly no man can follow two contrary objects and hope to secure either of them. No, it behoves a servant of Christ to be a concentrated man: his affections should be bound up into one affection, and that affection should not be set on things on the earth, but on things above; his heart

must not be divided, or it will be said of him as of those in Hosea, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found wanting." The chamber of the heart is far too narrow to accommodate the King of kings and the world, or the flesh, or the devil, at the same time. In the service of God we should use great care to accomplish our very best, and we should feel a deep anxiety to please Him in all things. There is a trade called paper-staining, in which a man flings colours upon the paper to make common wall decorations, and by rapid processes acres of paper can be speedily finished. Suppose that the paper-stainer should laugh at an eminent artist because he had covered such a little space, having been stippling and shading a little tiny piece of his picture by the hour together, such ridicule would itself be ridiculous. Now the world's way of religion is the paper-stainer's way, the daubing way; there is plenty of it, and it is quickly done; but God's way, the narrow way, is a careful matter; there is but little of it, and it costs thought, effort, watchfulness, and care. Yet see how precious is the work of art when it is done, and how long it lasts, and you will not wonder that a man spends his time upon it: even so true godliness is acceptable with God, and endures for ever, and therefore it well repays the earnest effort of the man of God. The miniature painter has to be very careful of every touch and tint, for a very little may spoil his work; let our life be a miniature painting: "with fear and trembling" let it be wrought out. We are serving the thrice Holy God, who will be had in reverence of them that come near to Him, let us mind what we do. Our blessed Master never made a faulty stroke when He was serving His Father; He never lived a careless hour, nor let drop an idle word. Oh, it was a careful life He lived: even the night watches were not without the deep anxieties which poured themselves forth in prayer unto God; and if you and I think that the first thing which comes to hand will do to serve our God with, we make a great mistake, and grossly insult His name. We must have a very low idea of His infinite majesty if we think that we can honour Him by doing His service half-heartedly, or in a slovenly style. No, if you will indeed live "as to the Lord and not unto man," you must watch each motion of your heart and life, or you will fail in your design. Our work for Jesus must be the outgrowth of the soil of the heart. Our service must not be performed as a matter of routine: there must be vigour, power, freshness, reality, eagerness, and warmth about it, or it will be good for nothing. No fish ever came upon God's altar, because it could not come there alive; the Lord wants none of your dead, heartless worship. You know what is meant by putting heart into all that we do; explain it by your lives. A work which is to be accepted of the Lord must be heart-work throughout; not a few thoughts of Christ occasionally, and a few chill words, and a few chance gifts, and a little done by way of by-play, but as the heart beats so must we serve God: it must be our very life. We are not to treat our religion as though it were a sort of off-hand farm which we were willing to keep going but not to make much of, our chief thoughts being engrossed with the home farm of self and the world, with its gains and pleasures. Our Lord will be aut Cœsar aut nullus, either ruler or nothing. My Master is a jealous husband: He will not tolerate a stray thought of love elsewhere, and He thinks it scorn that they who call them-selves His beloved should love others better than Himself. Such unchastity of heart can never be permitted, let us not dream of it.

What a mean and beggarly thing it is for a man only to do his work well when he is watched. Such oversight is for boys at school and mere hirelings. You never think of watching noble-spirited men. Here is a young apprentice set to copy a picture: his master stands over him and looks over each line, for the young scapegrace will grow careless and spoil his work, or take to his games if he be not well looked after. Did anybody thus dream of supervising Raphael and Michael Angelo to keep them to their work? No, the master artist requires no eye to urge him on. Popes and emperors

came to visit the great painters in their studios, but did they paint the better because these grandees gazed upon them? Certainly not; perhaps they did all the worse in the excitement or the worry of the visit. They had regard to something better than the eye of pompous personages. So the true Christian wants no eye of man to watch him. There may be pastors and preachers who are the better for being looked after by bishops and presbyters; but fancy a bishop overseeing the work of Martin Luther, and trying to quicken his zeal; or imagine a presbyter looking after Calvin to keep him sound in the faith. Oh, no; gracious minds outgrow the governance and stimulus which comes of the oversight of mortal man. God's own Spirit dwells within us, and we serve the Lord from an inward principle, which is not fed from without. There is about a real Christian a prevailing sense that God sees him, and he does not care who else may set his eye upon him; it is enough for him that God is there. He hath small respect to the eye of man, he neither courts nor dreads it. Let the good deed remain in the dark, for God sees it there, and that is enough; or let it be blazoned in the light of day to be pecked at by the censorious, for it little matters who censures since God approves. This is to be a true servant of Christ; to escape from being an eye-servant to men by becoming in the sublimest sense an eye-servant, working ever beneath the eye of God.

Wage? Is that the motive of a Christian? Yes, in the highest sense, for the greatest of the saints, such as Moses, have "had respect unto the recompense of the reward," and it were like despising the reward which God promises to his people if we had no respect whatever unto it. Respect unto the reward which cometh of God kills the selfishness which is always expecting a reward from men. We can postpone our reward, and we can be content, instead of receiving present praise, to be misunderstood and misrepresented: we can postpone our reward, and we can endure instead thereof to be disappointed in our work, and to labour on without success, or when the reward does come how glorious it will be! An hour with Jesus will make up for a lifetime of persecution! One smile from Him will repay us a thousand times over for all disappointments and discouragements.

Chapter 11: A Great Leader and Good Soldiers

A Great Leader And Good Soldiers

WHAT wonders men can do when they are influenced by enthusiastic love for a Leader! Alexander's troops marched thousands of miles on foot, and they would have been utterly wearied had it not been for their zeal for Alexander. He led them forth conquering and to conquer. Alexander's presence was the life of their valour, the glory of their strength. If there was a very long day's march over burning sands, one thing they knew,—that Alexander marched with them; if they were thirsty, they knew that he thirsted too, for when one brought a cup of water to the king, he put it aside, thirsty as he was, and said, "Give it to the sick soldier." Once it so happened that they were loaded with the spoil which they had taken, and each man had become rich with goodly garments and wedges of gold; then they began to travel very slowly with so much to carry, and the king feared that he should not overtake his foe. Having a large quantity of spoil which fell to his own share, he burned it all before the eyes of his soldiers, and bade them do the like, that they might pursue the enemy and win even more. "Alexander's portion lies beyond," cried he, and seeing the king's own spoils on fire his warriors were content to give up their gains also and share with their king. He did himself what he commanded others to do: in self-denial and hardship he was a full partaker with his followers. After this fashion our Lord and Master acts towards us. He says, "Renounce pleasure for the good of others. Deny yourself, and take up your cross. Suffer, though you might avoid it; labour, though you might rest, when God's glory demands suffering or labour of you. Have not I set you an example?" "Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." He stripped Himself of all things that He might clothe us with His glory. When we heartily serve such a Leader as this, and are fired by His spirit, then murmuring, and complaining, and weariness, and fainting of heart are altogether fled: a divine passion carries us beyond ourselves.

I believe great numbers of working men—I am not going to judge them for it—always consider how little they can possibly do to earn their wages, and the question with them is not, "How much can we give for the wage?" that used to be; but, "How little can we give? How little work can we do in the day, without being discharged for idleness? "Many men say, "We must not do all the work to-day, for we shall need something to do to-morrow: our masters will not give us more than they can help, and therefore we will not give them more than we are obliged to." This is the general spirit on both sides, and as a nation we are going to the dogs because that spirit is among us; and we shall be more and more beaten by foreign competition if this spirit is cultivated. Among Christians such a notion cannot be tolerated in the service of our Lord Jesus. It never does for a minister to say, "If I preach three times a week it is quite as much as anybody will expect of me; therefore I shall do no more." It will never be right for you to say, "I am a Sabbath-school teacher; if I get into the class to the minute—some of you do not do that—and if I stop just as long as the class lasts, I need not look after the boys and girls through the week; I cannot be bothered with them: I will do just as much as I am bound to do, but no more." In a certain country town it was reported that the grocer's wife cut a plum in two, for fear there should be a grain more than weight

in the parcel, and the folks called her Mrs. Splitplum. Ah, there are many Split-plums in religion, They do not want to do more for Jesus than may be absolutely necessary. They would like to give good weight, but they would be sorry to be convicted of doing too much. Ah, when we get to feel we are doing service for our Lord Jesus Christ, we adopt a far more liberal scale. Then we do not calculate how much ointment will suffice for His feet, but we give Him all that our box contains. Is this your talk, "Here, bring the scales, this ointment cost a great deal of money, we must be economical. Watch every drachm, yea, every scruple and grain, for the nard is costly"? If this be your cool manner of calculation your offering is not worth a fig. Not so spake that daughter of love of whom we read in the gospels, for she brake the box and poured out all the contents upon her Lord. "To what purpose is this waste"? cried Judas. It was Judas who thus spoke, and you know therefore the worth of the observation. Christ's servants delight to give so much as to be thought wasteful, for they feel that when they have in the judgment of others done extravagantly for Christ, they have but begun to show their hearts' love for His dear name. Thus the elevating power of the spirit of consecration lifts us up above the wretched parsimony of mere formality.

"Is the work good enough?" said one to his servant. The man replied, "Sir, it is good enough for the price: and it is good enough for the man who is going to have it." Just so, and when we "serve" men we may perhaps rightly judge in that fashion, but when we come to serve Christ, is anything good enough for Him? Could our zeal know no respite, could our prayers know no pause, could our efforts know no relaxation, could we give all we have of time, wealth, talent, and opportunity, could we die a martyr's death a thousand times, would not He, the Best Beloved of our souls, deserve far more? Ah, that He would. Therefore is self-congratulation banished for ever. When you have done all, you will feel that it is not worthy of the matchless merit of Jesus, and you will be humbled at the thought. Thus, while doing all for Jesus stimulates zeal, it fosters humility, a happy blending of useful effects. The resolve to do all as unto the Lord will elevate you above that craving for recognition which is a disease with many. It is a sad fault in many Christians that they cannot do anything unless all the world is told of it. The hen in the farm-yard has laid an egg, and feels so proud of the achievement that she must cackle about it: everybody must know of that one poor egg, till all the country round resounds with the news. It is so with some professors: their work must be published, or they can do no more. "Here have I," said one, "been teaching in the school for years, and nobody ever thanked me for it; I believe that some of us who do the most are the least noticed, and what a shame it is." But if you have done your service unto the Lord you should not talk so, or we shall suspect you of having other aims. The servant of Jesus will say, "I do not want human notice. I did it for the Master; He noticed me, and I am content. I tried to please Him, and I did please Him, and therefore I ask no more, for I have gained my end. I seek no praise of men, for I fear lest the breath of human praise should tarnish the pure silver of my service."

If you seek the praise of men you will in all probability fail in the present, and certainly you will lose it in the future sooner or later. Many men are more ready to censure than to commend; and to hope for their praise is to seek for sugar in a root of wormwood. Man's way of judging is unjust, and seems fashioned on purpose to blame all of us one way or another. Here is a brother who sings bass, and the critics say, "Oh, yes, a very fine bass voice, but he could not sing treble." Here is another who excels in treble, and they say, "Yes, yes, but we prefer a tenor." When they find a tenor they blame him because he cannot take the bass. No one can be candidly praised, but all must be savagely censured. What will the great Master say about it? Will He not judge thus—"I

have given this man a bass voice, and he sings bass, and that is what I meant him to do: I gave that man a tenor voice, and he sings tenor, and that is what I meant him to do: I gave that man a treble voice, and he sings treble, and so takes the part I meant him to take. All the parts blended together make up sweet music for My ears"? Wisdom is justified of her children, but folly blames them all round. How little we ought to care about the opinions and criticisms of our fellow-men when we recollect that He who made us what we are, and helps us by His grace to act our part, will not judge us after the mode in which men carp or flatter, but will accept us according to the sincerity of our hearts. If we feel, "I was not working for you; I was working for God," we shall not be much wounded by our neighbours' remarks. The nightingale charms the ear of night. A fool passes by, and declares that he hates such distracting noises. The nightingale sings on, for it never entered the little minstrel's head or heart that it was singing for critics: it sings because He who created it gave it this sweet faculty. So may we reply to those who condemn us,—"We live not unto you, O men; we live unto our Lord." Thus do we escape the discouragements which come of ungenerous misapprehension and jealous censure.

If those you seek to bless be not saved, yet you have not altogether failed, for you did not teach or preach having the winning of souls as the absolute ultimatum of your work, you did it with the view of pleasing Jesus, and He is pleased with faithfulness even where it is not accompanied with success. Sincere obedience is His delight even if it lead to no apparent result. If the Lord should set His servant to plough the sea or sow the sand He would accept his service. If we should have to witness for Christ's Name to stocks and stones, and our hearers should be even worse than blocks of marble, and should turn again and rend us, we may still be filled with contentment, for we shall have done our Lord's will, and what more do we want? To plod on under apparent failure is one of the most acceptable of all works of faith, and he who can do it year after year is assuredly well-pleasing unto God.

We shall have to go away from our work soon, so men tell us, and we are apt to fret about it. The truth is we shall go on with our work for ever if our service is pleasing to the Lord. We shall please Him up yonder even better than we do here. And what if our enterprise here should seem to end, as far as man is concerned, we have done it unto the Lord, and our record is on high, and therefore it is not lost. Nothing that is done for Jesus will be destroyed: the flower may fade, but its essence remains; the tree may fall, but its fruit is stored; the cluster may be crushed, but the wine is preserved; the work and its place may pass away, but the glory which it brought to Jesus shines as the stars for ever and ever. A due sense of serving the Lord would ennoble all our service beyond conception. Think of working for Him,—for Him, the best of Masters, before whom angels count it glory to bow. Work done for Him is in itself the best work that can be, for all that pleases Him must be pure and lovely, honest and of good report. Work for the eternal Father and work for Jesus are works which are good and only good. To live for Jesus is to be swayed by the noblest of motives. To live for the incarnate God is to blend the love of God and the love of men in one passion. To live for the ever-living Christ is elevating to the soul, for its results will be most enduring. When all other work is dissolved this shall abide. Men spake of painting for eternity, but we in very deed serve for eternity.

Soon shall all worlds behold the nobility of the service of Christ, for it will bring with it the most blessed of all rewards. When men look back on what they have done for their fellows, how small is the recompense of a patriotic life! The world soon forgets its benefactors. Many and many a man

has been borne aloft in youth amidst the applause of men, and then in his old age he has been left to starve into his grave. He who scattered gold at first, begs pence at last: the world called him generous while he had something to give, and when he had bestowed all it blamed his imprudence. He who lives for Jesus will never have ground of complaint concerning his Lord, for He forsaketh not His saints. Never man regretted ought he did for Jesus yet, save that he may regret that he has not done ten times more. The Lord will not leave His old servants. "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works; now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not," such was the prayer of David, and he was confident of being heard. Such may be the confidence of every servant of Christ. He may go down to his grave untroubled; he may rise and enter the dread solemnities of the eternal world without a fear, for service for Christ creates heroes to whom fear is unknown.

Chapter 12: In The Sunday School

In The Sunday School

SUNDAY-SCHOOL work is well-doing. How can it be otherwise, for it is an act of obedience? I trust you have entered upon it because you call Jesus your Master and Lord, and you wish to fulfil the great command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." You find children to be creatures, fallen creatures, but still lovable little things, full of vigour and life, and glee. You see them to be a component part of the race, and you conclude at once that your Master's command applies to them. You are not like the disciples who would put them back, for you have learned from their mistake, and you remember the words of their Master and yours, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." You know, too, that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he hath ordained strength because of the adversary; so that you are sure that He included the little ones in the general commission when He said, "Preach the gospel to every creature." You are doubly sure that you are obeying His will because you have certain special precepts which relate to the little ones, such as "Feed my lambs," and "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it." You know that it is our duty to preserve alive a testimony in the world, and therefore you are anxious to teach the Word to your children that they may teach it to their children, that so, from generation to generation, the Word of the Lord may be made known. Be the task pleasant or irksome to you, it is not yours to hesitate, but to obey. The love which has redeemed you also constrains you. You feel the touch of the sacred hand upon your shoulder, the hand which once was pierced, and you hear your Redeemer say, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;" and because of that sending, you go forth to the little ones in obedience to His will. He who obeys is doing well, and in this sense your service among the little ones is well-doing.

Well-doing it is, again, because it brings glory to God. We must always continue to receive from God, who is the great fountain of goodness and blessing, but yet, in infinite condescension, he permits us to make Him some return. As the dewdrop reflects the beam with which the great sun adorns it, so may we, in our measure, make the light of our great Father to sparkle before the eyes of men. Our lives may be as the rivers which run into the sea from whence they originally came. Whenever we attempt that which will clearly promote the divine glory, we are well-doing. When we make known Jehovah's grace, when we work in accordance with His purposes of love, when we speak forth the truth which honours His beloved Son; whenever, indeed, the Holy Spirit through us bears witness to the eternal verities of the gospel, there is well-doing towards God. We cannot increase His intrinsic glory, but through His Spirit we can make His glory to be more widely seen: and among the choicest ways of doing this we give a high place to the teaching of children the fear of the Lord, in order that they may be a seed to serve Him, and to rejoice in His salvation. And who shall doubt that Sabbath-school work is well-doing towards man? The highest form of charity is to teach our fellow-man the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thou mayest give bread to thy fellow, but when he has eaten, it is gone; if thou givest him the bread of life, it abides with him for ever. Thou mayest give him bread in plenty, but in due time he will die, as his fathers have done before him;

but if thou givest him the bread of heaven, and he eat thereof, he shall live for ever. God has enabled thee to hand out to him immortal food, even Jesus, who is "that bread from heaven." What a blessing it is to a man if you are the instrument of changing his heart, and so of emancipating him from vice and making him free unto holiness? To lead a soul to Christ is to lead it to heaven. It is assuredly a noble part of benevolence to deliver the gospel to the sons of men; and, if possible, this benevolence is of a still higher kind when you deliver the truth of God to children, for as prevention is better than a cure, so is it better to prevent a life of vice than to rescue from it; and as the earlier a soul has light the shorter is its night of darkness, so the earlier in life salvation comes to the heart the better, and greater is the benediction. To receive the dew of grace while we are yet in the dew of youth is a double boon. Your work is one of well-doing, of the most thorough and radical kind, for you strike at the very root of sin in the child by seeking his regeneration. You desire, by the grace of God, to win the heart for Christ at the beginning of life, and this is the best of blessings. I hope you are not among those who only hope to see your children converted when they are grown up, and feel satisfied to let them remain in their sins while they are children. I hope that you pray for the conversion of children as children, and are working to that end by the Spirit's gracious aid. If you are doing so, I know not of any service more fit to engage the angels of heaven, if they could be permitted to undertake it. Surely, if they could teach the gospel to mankind, and had their choice of learners, they might well pass those by who are already hardened in sin, and who can only give their tottering age to Christ; and gather for Him the young whose day is but dawning. We may not set one work against another, but at any rate, we may count ourselves happy if our sphere is among the young. Let us gather the rosebuds for Jesus. Let us bring to Him the virgin in her earliest beauty, and the young man in his first vigour, before sin and age have quite despoiled them of their charms. Let us find for Him those who can give Him a whole life, and honour Him from dawn till its eve. Oh, it is glorious to have such work for Jesus! Go ye to your youthful charges, rejoicing in your work, for it is well-doing. When I had a little garden of my own, and put in mustard and cress, I went the next morning to see if it was sprouting, and was not satisfied to wait for the due season. I turned over the mould, and I daresay I checked the growth of the seed by my over haste. It is quite possible for teachers to commit the same folly by an unbelieving hurry, expecting to reap to-morrow what they have sown to-day. Immediate fruit may come, for God worketh marvellously, but whether it does or not, your plain duty is to sow. Reap you shall, but meanwhile you must be satisfied to go on sowing, sowing, sowing, even to the end. Reaping is your reward, but sowing is your work. Sowing, sowing, ever sowing, till the hand is palsied in death, and the seed basket is carried on another arm. Well-doing by sowing the seed is your work.

You will be tempted to grow weary. Hard work, this teaching children. Some good souls seem born to it, do it splendidly, and enjoy it; to others it is a stern labour. Some are by constitution exceedingly inapt at it, but I do not think that they should excuse themselves by that fact, but should educate themselves into loving the work: many people around us are very inapt at anything which would cause them a perspiration, but we call them lazy, and goad them on. It is no new thing for men to attempt to escape the army by pretending to be in bad health, but we must have none of this cowardly malingering in Christ's army; we must be ready for anything and everything. We must compel ourselves to duty when it goes against the grain. When it is a clear duty, obedience must master our aversion. I have no doubt whatever that teaching is, to some, very toilsome work, but then it has to be done all the same. I delight to hear you speak with holy

enthusiasm of the privilege of teaching children, and I fully believe in it; but I know also that it requires no small degree of self-denial on your part, self-denial for which the Church does not always give you due credit. To continue from Sabbath to Sabbath drilling some little Biblical knowledge into those noisy boys, and trying to sober down those giddy girls, is no light amusement or pretty pastime. It must be a toil, and therefore it is not difficult to become weary.

Teachers may the more readily tire because the work lasts on year after year. I admire the veterans of your army. There ought to be an Old Guard as well as new regiments. Why leave this work to young beginners? Did not David say, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord," when he was in the prime of life? Why, then, do so many cease to teach when they are best qualified to do so? Have not many aged persons a gentleness and an impressiveness which peculiarly qualify them to arrest the attention of the young? As they know more by experience than most of us, should they not be all the readier to impart instruction? It was always my delight to sit at my grandfather's feet when he told out his experience of the grace of God. When he was eighty years old or more his witness to the faithfulness of God was worth going many miles to hear. There are scores of aged men and women whose life-story ought to be often told among children; with their loving ways and cheerful manners they would be an acquisition to any school for the children's sake, while to the teachers their weight and wisdom would be an incalculable benefit. Die in harness if your mental and physical vigour will permit. Still, the long round of many years' labour must tend to make the worker weary; and the more so if the work is allowed to become monotonous, as in some schools it certainly is. You go to the same dingy room and sit on the same chair before the same class of boys. It is true the boys are not the same boys, for though the proverb says, "Boys will be boys," I find that they will not be boys, but that they will be men; but still one boy is so much like another boy that the class is evermore the same. The lessons vary but the truth is the same, and the work of teaching is like the sowing of seed—very much the same thing over and over again. Lovers of change will hardly find in regular Sunday-school work a field for their fickleness. The text says, "Be not weary." Are you tired out? How long have you been teaching? A thousand years? You smile; and I smile, too, and say—Do not be weary with any period of service short of that. Our Lord deserves a whole eternity to be spent in His praise, and we hope so to spend it; and, therefore, let us not be weary with the few years which constitute the ordinary life of man.

Chapter 13: Hard Work and Its Reward

Hard Work and Its Reward DO you not think that at times our getting lax in Christian work arises from our being very low in grace? As a rule, you cannot get out of a man that which is not in him. You cannot go forth yourself to your class and do your work vigorously if you have lost inward vigour. You cannot minister before the Lord with the unction of the Holy One if that unction is not upon you. If you are not living near to God and in the power of God, then the power of God will not go forth through you to the children of your care; so that I think we should judge, when we become discontented and down-hearted, that we are out of sorts spiritually. Let us say to ourselves, "Come! my soul! What aileth thee? This faint heart is a sign that thou art out of health. Go to the great Physician, and obtain from Him a tonic which shall brace thee. Come, play the man. Have none of these whims! Away with your idleness! The reaping-time will come, therefore thrust in the plough." Is not another reason why we become down-hearted to be found in the coldness and indifference of our fellow-Christians? We see others doing the Lord's work carelessly: and when we are all on fire ourselves we find them to be cold as ice: we get among people in the church who do not seem to care whether the souls of the children are saved or not, and thus we are apt to be discouraged. The idleness of others should be an argument for our being more diligent ourselves. If our Master's work is suffering at the hands of our fellow-servants should we not try to do twice as much ourselves to make up for their deficiencies? Ought not the laggards to be warnings to us lest we also come into the same lukewarm condition? To argue that I ought to be a sluggard because others loiter is poor logic.

Sometimes, too—I am ashamed to mention it—I have heard of teachers becoming weary from want of being appreciated. Their work has not been sufficiently noticed by the pastor, and praised by the superintendent, and sufficient notice has not been taken of them and their class by their fellow-teachers. I will not say much about this cause of faintness, because it is so small an affair that it is quite below a Christian. Appreciation! Do we expect it in this world? The Jewish nation despised and rejected their King, and even if we were as holy as the Lord Jesus we might still fail to be rightly judged and properly esteemed. What matters it? If God accepts us we need not be dismayed, though all should pass us by.

Perhaps, however, the work itself may suggest to us a little more excuse for being weary. It is hard work to sow on the highway, and amidst the thorns—hard work to be casting good seed upon the rock year after year. Well, if I had done so for many years, and was enabled by the Holy Ghost, I would say to myself: "I shall not give up my work because I have not yet received a recompense in it, for I perceive that in the Lord's parable three sowings did not succeed, and yet the one piece of good ground paid for all. Perhaps I have gone through my three unsuccessful sowings, and now is my time to enjoy my fourth, in which the seed will fall upon good ground." It is a pity, when you have had some years of rough work, to give all up now. Why, now you are going to enjoy the sweets of your former labour. It would be a pity, just when you have mastered your class, and prepared the way for a blessing, for you to run away from it. There is so much less of difficulty for you to overcome by as much as you have already overcome. He who has passed so many miles

of a rough voyage will not have to go over those miles again: do not let him think of going back. To go back, indeed, in this pilgrimage were shameful: and as we have no armour for our back, it would be dangerous. Putting our hand to this plough and looking back will prove that we were unworthy of the kingdom. If there be a hundred reasons for giving up your work of faith, there are fifty thousand for going on with it. Though there are many arguments for fainting, there are far more arguments for persevering. Though we might be weary, and do sometimes feel so, let us wait upon the Lord and renew our strength, and we shall mount up with wings as eagles, forget our weariness, and be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

We have abundant encouragement in the prospect of reward. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not." The reaping time will come. Our chief business is to glorify God by teaching the truth whether souls are saved or not; but still I demur to the statement that we may go on preaching the gospel for years and years, and even all our life-time, and yet no result may follow. They say, "Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase." I should like them to find that passage in the Bible. In my English Bible it runs thus: "I (Paul) have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." There is not the slightest intent to teach us that when Paul planted and Apollos watered, God would arbitrarily refuse the increase. All the glory is claimed for the Lord, but honest labour is not despised. I do not say that there is the same relation between teaching the truth and conversion as there is between cause and effect, so that they are invariably connected; but I will maintain that it is the rule of the kingdom that they should be connected, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Some causes will not produce effects because certain obstacles intervene to prevent. A person may teach the gospel in a bad spirit; that must spoil it. A person may teach only part of the gospel, and he may put that the wrong way upwards. God may bless it somewhat, but yet the good man may greatly retard the blessing by the mistaken manner in which he delivers the truth. Take it as a rule that the truth of God prayed over, spoken in the fear of the Lord, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in the man who speaks it, will produce the effect which is natural to it. As the rain climbs not up to the skies, and the snow-flakes never take to themselves wings to rise to heaven, so neither shall the Word of God return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. We have not spent our strength in vain. Not a verse taught to a little girl, nor a text dropped into the ear of a careless boy, nor an earnest warning given to an obdurate young sinner, nor a loving farewell to one of the senior girls, shall be without some result or other to the glory of God. And, taking it all together as a mass, though this handful of seed may be eaten of the birds, and that other seed may die on the hard rock, yet, as a whole, the seed shall spring up in sufficient abundance to plentifully reward the sower and the giver of the seed. We know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Go to your classes with this persuasion, "I shall not labour in vain, or spend my strength for nought." "According to your faith, so be it unto you." Take a little measure, and you shall have it filled with the manna of success, but take a great omer, and in its fulness you shall have abundance. Believe in the power of the truth you teach. Believe in the power of Christ about whom you speak. Believe in the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost, whose help you have invoked in earnest prayer. Go to your sowing, and reckon upon reaping.

"Let us not be weary, for we shall reap." We shall reap. It is not, "We shall do the work, and our successors shall reap after we are gone." We ought to be very pleased even with that, and no doubt such is often the case. But we shall reap too. Yes, I shall have my sheaves, and you will have yours. The plot which I have toiled and wept over shall yield me my sheaves of harvest, and I

shall personally gather them. I shall reap. "I never thought much of myself as a teacher," says one, "I always feel that I am hardly competent, and I notice that the superintendent has only trusted me with the little children; but I am so glad to hear that I shall reap. I shall reap. I shall have a dear little one, saved in the Lord, to be my portion." I pray you, if you have never reaped yet, begin to hope. You teachers who are always punctual, I mean: of course, if you do not come in time, you do not care whether you reap or not; but I speak to punctual teachers, I speak also to earnest teachers—for if you are not earnest you will never reap: you punctual, earnest, prayerful teachers shall reap. Some teachers do not go in for reaping, and they will not enjoy it. But I am speaking now to real, hard-working, earnest Sunday-school teachers who give their hearts to it, and yet have seen no results. According to the text, you shall reap. Come, my persevering comrades, let us not be discouraged: "In due season we shall reap," even we. You shall have your share with others. Though you feel as though you must give it up, you shall yet reap. After sowing all. this while, do not cease from labour when reaping time is so near. If I were a farmer, if I did give up my farm, it should be before I sowed my wheat, but if I had done all the ploughing and the sowing, I should not say to my landlord, "There are six weeks and then cometh harvest, and I desire to let another tenant come in." No, no. I should want to stop and see the harvest gathered and the wheat taken to market. I should want to have my reward. So wait for your recompense, specially you that have been discouraged,—"In due time we shall reap, if we faint not." We who have thought least of our service, and perhaps have exercised least faith, and endured most searchings of heart and most groaning and crying before the Lord, we also "in due season shall reap, if we faint not."

What reward can equal the conversion of these young immortals? Is it not the highest felicity that we can enjoy on earth, next to communion with our Lord, to see these little ones saved?

Taking the Sunday-school, however, on a broad scale, I think your reward partly lies in rearing up a generation of worship-loving people. We cannot get at the great masses of London, do what we may. Go into what evangelistic assembly you may, you will soon detect from the manner of the singing that the bulk of the people have been accustomed to sacred song. We do not know how to get at the great tens of thousands; but you do. You reach them while they are little, and you send them home to sing their hymns to their fathers, who will not come and sing them. They go and tell their mothers all about Jesus, so that the children of London are the missionaries of our city. They are Christ's heralds to the families where ministers would be totally shut out. You are training them up, and if you do this work well (and I charge you to look well to the connecting link between your senior classes and the church), if you do this work well, we shall require more places of worship, and more earnest ministers, for the people will take to coming to the house of prayer. When that day arrives there will be a grand time for the preachers of the Word. In some villages of England, and especially in Scotland, you will scarcely find a single person absent when the house of God is open! They all go to the kirk, or to the meetinghouse. Alas, it is not so in London. We have hundreds of thousands who forget the Sabbath. We have, I fear, more than a million of our fellow-citizens who go so seldom to a place of worship that they may be said to be habitually absent. It will be a grand thing if you can change all this, and give us church-going millions. And then, I believe that to you there will be another reward, namely, that of saturating the whole population with religious truth. All children are now to be taught to read. Shall they read so as to grow up highwaymen and thieves, or shall they read so as to become servants of the living God? Very much of that must depend upon you. You will, in due subordination to all other objects, take

care to introduce your children to interesting but sound literature. Your boys must read, and if you are the teacher of a boy who reads "Jack Sheppard," you will be sadly to blame if he continues to delight in such an abomination. I trust that your leaven will leaven the whole lump of our country; that you will be the means of improving the moral tone of society, and as generation follows generation I trust we shall see a nation bright with religious knowledge, devout with religious thought, and in all things exalted by justice and truth.

Chapter 14: Workers Ready to Profit

Workers Reading to Profit

I AM afraid that this is a magazine-reading age, a newspaper-reading age, a periodical-reading age, but not so much a Bible-reading age as it ought to be. In Puritanic times men used to have a scant supply of other literature, but they found a library enough in the one Book, the Bible. And how they did read the Bible! How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritanic divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast sidelights upon a text of Scripture; not only the one they are preaching about, but many others as well are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel thereunto, and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual. I would to God that we ministers kept more closely to the grand old Book! We should be instructive preachers if we did so, even if we were ignorant of "modern thought," and were not "abreast of the times." I warrant you we should be leagues ahead of our times if we kept closely to the Word of God. As for you who have not to preach, the best food for you is the Word of God itself. Sermons and books are well enough, but streams that run for a long distance above ground gradually gather for themselves somewhat of the soil through which they flow, and they lose the cool freshness with which they started from the spring head. Truth is sweetest where it breaks from the smitten Rock, for at its first gush it has lost none of its heavenliness and vitality. It is always best to drink at the well and not from the tank. You shall find that reading the Word of God for yourselves, reading it rather than notes upon it, is the surest way of growing in grace. Drink of the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, and not of the skim milk, or the milk and water of man's word.

Much apparent Bible reading is not Bible reading at all. The verses pass under the eye, and the sentences glide over the mind, but there is no true reading. An old preacher used to say, the Word has mighty free course among many nowadays, for it goes in at one of their ears and out at the other; so it seems to be with some readers—they can read a very great deal, because they do not read anything. The eye glances, but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the truth and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest therein, and finds no rest for the sole of its foot. Such reading is not reading. Understanding the meaning is the essence of true reading. Reading has a kernel to it, and the mere shell is little worth. In prayer there is such a thing as praying in prayer. So in praise there is a praising in song, an inward fire of intense devotion which is the life of the hallelujah. It is so in fasting: there is a fasting which is not fasting, and there is an inward fasting, a fasting of the soul, which is the soul of fasting. It is even so with the reading of the Scriptures. There is an interior reading, a kernel reading—a true and living reading of the Word. This is the soul of reading; and, if it be not there, the reading is a mechanical exercise, and profits nothing.

Certainly, the benefit of reading must come to the soul by the way of the understanding. When the high priest went into the holy place he always lit the golden candlestick before he kindled the

incense upon the brazen altar, as if to show that the mind must have illumination before the affections can properly rise towards their divine object. There must be knowledge of God before there can be love to God: there must be a knowledge of divine things, as they are revealed, before there can be an enjoyment of them. We must try to make out, as far as our finite mind can grasp it, what God means by this and what He means by that; otherwise we may kiss the Book and have no love to its contents, we may reverence the letter and yet really have no devotion towards the Lord who speaks to us in these words. You will never get comfort to your soul out of what you do not understand, nor find guidance for your life out of what you do not comprehend; nor can any practical bearing upon your character come out of that which is not understood by you. When we come to the study of Holy Scripture we should try to have our mind well awake to it. We are not always fit, it seems to me, to read the Bible. At times it were well for us to stop before we open the volume. "Put off thy shoe from thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." You have just come in from careful thought and anxiety about your worldly business, and you cannot immediately take that book and enter into its heavenly mysteries. As you ask a blessing over your meat before you fall to so it would be a good rule for you to ask a blessing on the Word before you partake of its heavenly food. Pray the Lord to strengthen your eyes before you dare to look into the eternal light of Scripture. As the priests washed their feet at the laver before they went to their holy work, so it were well to wash the soul's eyes with which you look upon God's Word, to wash even the fingers, if I may so speak—the mental fingers with which you will turn from page to page,—that with a holy book you may deal after a holy fashion. Say to your soul—"Come, soul,—wake up: thou art not now about to read the newspaper; thou art not now perusing the pages of a human poet, to be dazzled by his flashing-poetry; thou art coming very near to God, who sits in the Word like a crowned monarch in his halls. Wake up, my glory; wake up all that is within me. Though just now I may not be praising and glorifying God, I am about to consider that which should lead me so to do, and therefore it is an act of devotion. So be on the stir, my soul: be on the stir, and bow not sleepily before the awful throne of the Eternal." Scripture reading is our spiritual meal-time. Sound the gong and call in every faculty to the Lord's own table to feast upon the precious meat which is now to be partaken of; or, rather, ring the church-bell as for worship, for the studying of the Holy Scripture ought to be as solemn a deed as when we lift the psalm upon the Sabbath day in the courts of the Lord's house. To understand what you read, you will need to meditate upon it. Some passages of Scripture lie clear before us—blessed shallows in which the lambs may wade; but there are deeps in which our mind might rather drown herself than swim with pleasure, if she came there without caution. There are texts of Scripture which are made and constructed on purpose to make us think. By this means, among others, our heavenly Father would educate us for heaven—by making us think our way into divine mysteries. Hence He puts the Word in a somewhat involved form to compel us to meditate upon it before we reach the sweetness of it. He might, you know, have explained it to us so that we might catch the thought in a minute, but He does not please to do so in every case. Many of the veils which are cast over Scripture are not meant to hide the meaning from the diligent, but to compel the mind to be active, for oftentimes the diligence of the heart in seeking to know the divine mind does the heart more good than the knowledge itself. Meditation and careful thought exercise us and strengthen the soul for the reception of the yet more lofty truths. I have heard that the mothers in the Baleric isles, in the old times, who wanted to bring their boys up to be good slingers, would put their dinners up above them where they could not get at them until they threw a stone and fetched them down: our Lord

wishes us to be good slingers, and He puts up some precious truth in a lofty place where we cannot get it down except by slinging at it; and, at last, we hit the mark and find food for our souls. Then have we the double benefit of learning the art of meditation and partaking of the sweet truth which it has brought within our reach. We must meditate. These grapes will yield no wine till we tread upon them. These olives must be put under the wheel, and pressed again and again, that the oil may flow therefrom. In a dish of nuts, you may know which nut has been eaten, because there is a little hole which the insect has punctured through the shell—just a little hole, and then inside there is the living thing eating up the kernel. Well, it is a grand thing to bore through the shell of the letter, and then to live inside feeding upon the kernel. I would wish to be such a little worm as that, living within and upon the Word of God, having bored my way through the shell, and having reached the innermost mystery of the blessed gospel. The Word of God is always most precious to the man who most lives upon it. As I sat under a wide-spreading beech, I was pleased to mark with prying curiosity the singular habits of that most wonderful of trees, which seems to have an intelligence about it which other trees have not. I wondered and admired the beech, but I thought to myself, I do not think half as much of this beech tree as yonder squirrel does. I see him leap from bough to bough, and I feel sure that he dearly values the old beech tree, because he has his home somewhere inside it in a hollow place, these branches are his shelter, and those beech-nuts are his food. He lives upon the tree. It is his world, his playground, his granary, his home; indeed, it is everything to him, and it is not so to me, for I find my rest and food elsewhere. With God's Word it is well for us to be like squirrels, living in it and living on it. Let us exercise our minds by leaping from bough to bough of it, find our rest and food in it, and make it our all in all. We shall be the people that get the profit out of it if we make it to be our food, our medicine, our treasury, our armoury, our rest, our delight. May the Holy Ghost lead us to do this, and make the Word thus precious to our souls.

Use all means and helps towards the understanding of the Scriptures. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch whether he understood the prophecy of Isaiah he replied, "How can I, unless some man should guide me?" Then Philip went up and opened to him the Word of the Lord. Some, under the pretence of being taught of the Spirit of God, refuse to be instructed by books or by living men. This is no honouring of the Spirit of God; it is a disrespect to Him, for if He gives to some of His servants more light than to others—and it is clear He does—then they are bound to give that light to others, and to use it for the good of the church. But if the other part of the church refuse to receive that light, to what end did the Spirit of God give it? This would imply that there is a mistake somewhere in the economy of gifts and graces, which is managed by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be so. The Lord Jesus Christ pleases to give more knowledge of His Word and more insight into it to some of His servants than to others, and it is ours joyfully to accept the knowledge which He gives in such ways as He chooses to give it. It would be most wicked of us to say, "We will not have the heavenly treasure which exists in earthen vessels. If God will give us the heavenly treasure out of His own hand, but not through the earthen vessel, we will have it; but we think we are too wise, too heavenly minded, too spiritual altogether to care for jewels when they are placed in earthen pots. We will not hear anybody, and we will not read anything except the Book itself, neither will we accept any light, except that which comes in through a crack in our own roof, We will not see by another man's candle, we would sooner remain in the dark." Do not let us fall into such folly. Let the light come from God, and though a child shall bring it, we will joyfully accept it. In reading we ought to seek out the spiritual teaching of the word. Our Lord says, "Have ye not read?" Then,

again, "Have ye not read?" and then He says, "If ye had known what this meaneth," and the meaning is something very spiritual. The text he quoted was, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"—a text out of the prophet Hosea. Now, the scribes and Pharisees were all for the letter—the sacrifice, the killing of the bullock, and so on. They overlooked the spiritual meaning of the passage, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice"—namely, that God prefers that we should care for our fellow-creatures rather than that we should observe any ceremonial of His law, so as to cause hunger or thirst, and thereby death, to any of the creatures that His hands have made. They ought to have passed beyond the outward into the spiritual, and all our readings ought to do the same. This should be the case when we read the historical passages, "Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?" This was a piece of history, and they ought so to have read it as to have found spiritual instruction in it. I have sometimes found even a greater depth of spirituality in the histories than I have in the Psalms. When you reach the inner and spiritual meaning of a history you are often surprised at the wondrous clearness—the realistic force—with which the teaching comes home to your soul. Some of the most marvellous mysteries of revelation are better understood by being set before our eyes in the histories than they are by the verbal declaration of them. When we have the statement to explain the illustration, the illustration expands and vivifies the statement. For instance, when our Lord Himself would explain to us what faith was, He sent us to the history of the brazen serpent; and who that has ever read the story of the brazen serpent has not felt that he has had a better idea of faith through the picture of the dying snake-bitten persons looking to the serpent of brass and living, than from any description which even Paul has given Us, wondrously as he defines and describes.

Just the same thing is true with regard to all the ceremonial precepts, because the Saviour goes on to say, "Have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" There is not a single precept in the old law but has an inner sense and meaning; therefore do not turn away from Leviticus, or say, "I cannot read these chapters in the Books of Exodus and Numbers. They are all about the tribes and their standards, the stations in the wilderness and the halts of the march, the tabernacle and furniture, or about golden knops and bowls, and boards, and sockets, and precious stones, and blue and scarlet and fine linen." No, but look for the inner meaning. Make thorough search; for as in a king's treasure that which is the most closely locked up and the hardest to come at is the choicest jewel of the treasure, so is it with the Holy Scriptures. Did you ever go to the British Museum Library? There are many books of reference there which the reader is allowed to take down when he pleases. There are other books for which he must write a ticket, and he cannot get them without the ticket; but they have certain choice books which you will not see without a special order, and then there is an unlocking of doors, and an opening of cases, and there is a watcher with you while you make your inspection. You are scarcely allowed to put your eye on the manuscript, for fear you should blot a letter out by glancing at it; it is such a precious treasure; there is not another copy of it in all the world, and so you cannot get at it easily. Just so, there are choice and precious doctrines of God's Word which are locked up in such cases as Leviticus or Solomon's Song, and you cannot get at them without a deal of unlocking of doors; and the Holy Spirit Himself must be with you, or else you will never come at the priceless treasure. The higher truths are as choicely hidden away as the precious regalia of princes; therefore search as well as read. Do not be satisfied with a

ceremonial precept till you reach its spiritual meaning, for that is true reading. You have not read till you understand the spirit of the matter.

You will get a thousand helps out of that wondrous book if you do but read it; for, understanding the words more, you will prize it more, and, as you get older, the Book will grow with your growth, and turn out to be a grey-beard's manual of devotion just as it was aforetime a child's sweet story book. Yes, it will always be a new book—just as new a Bible as if it was printed yesterday, and nobody had ever seen a word of it till now; and yet it will be a deal more precious for all the memories which cluster round it. As we turn over its pages how sweetly do we recollect passages in our history which will never be forgotten to all eternity, but will stand for ever intertwined with gracious promises. The Lord teach us to read His book of life which He has opened before us here below, so that we may read our titles clear in that other book of love which we have not seen as yet, but which will be opened at the last great day.

Chapter 15: "The Harvest Truly Is Plentiful"

"The Harvest Truly Is Plentiful" OUR Saviour looked upon the people among whom He moved in a manner worthy of our imitation. He was a Man of great feeling, He was "moved with compassion," His sympathies were awakened; He could not look upon a mass of men with an indifferent countenance, His inmost soul was stirred; but at the same time He was no mere enthusiast, He was as calmly practical as if He had been a cool calculator. If He sighed, He did something more than sigh; He proceeded to aid those He pitied. He had practical compassion on the crowd, and, therefore, He turned to His disciples and said, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." He did not go about among the masses with an undiscerning admiration of them; I do not hear Him praising them as "the finest peasantry," or "the sinew of the nation," as some will do; but neither do we see in Him any trace of aversion to them, as though He felt out of place in their society. He was often saddened by their follies, and grieved by their sins, but He never loathed them, or spoke contemptuously of them. The common people heard Him gladly, because they saw that He had sympathy with them. Though in character grandly aristocratic, He was in manner and life profoundly democratic; He was a King, and yet "one chosen out of the people," who loved them with all His heart. It is clear also that He never grew discouraged in labouring for their good; you never hear Him say that it is useless to preach to the multitude, that they are too degraded, too priest-ridden, or too ignorant. No discouragement ever damped His ardour; He persevered till His work was done. A brave, glorious heart was that of Jesus, always melted to tenderness, but, at the same time, always practical; never influenced either by admiration, or aversion, or discouragement, so as to cease from practical methods of bettering the condition of the people among whom he dwelt. The thought of multitude rises naturally from the sight of a harvest-field, and when the crop is plentiful the idea of multitude forces itself upon you at once. You cannot count the ears of corn, neither will you be able to count the sons of men. I suppose our Saviour alluded first of all to the crowds around Himself, but His mind being much more capacious than ours, He remembered all the thousands of Israel; nay, methinks He could not have restricted His heart to the little country of Israel, He glanced across the seas and beyond the mountains to the myriads of mankind swarming upon this globe. It crushes one to think of the millions of our species. Nobody yet has been able to obtain an idea of the vast extent of this one city of London; you shall traverse it from end to end as long as you will, and you shall study its statistics, but you have no conception what the population of London is, and you never will have,—the mass is too great. But what is London compared with our nation, and with the millions that speak our mother tongue all over the world? Yet even these are but a small portion of the innumerable host. We never shall be able to obtain even a fringe of a conception of China with its teeming millions, or of that other populous nation which owns our sceptre, Hindostan. Multitudes are in the valley of existence, as the drops from the rain-cloud and as the leaves upon the forest trees; such are the sons of men. But when the Lord spake of them as a harvest, He had before His mind the idea of danger to them. Suppose the owner of some large estate should walk through his broad acres and should say, "I have a great harvest—look at those far-reaching fields: but the country has become depopulated, the people have emigrated, and I

have no labourers. There are one or two yonder, they are reaping with all their might, they make long days, and they toil till they faint; but over yonder there are vast ranges of my farm unreaped, and I have not a sickle to thrust in. The corn is being wasted, and it grieves me sorely. See how the birds are gathering in troops to prey upon the precious ears! Meanwhile the season is far advanced, the autumn damps are already upon us, and the chill, frosty nights which are winter's vanguard are on their way. Mildew is spoiling the grain, and what remains sound will shell out upon the ground, or swell with the moisture and become of no service." Behold in this picture the Redeemer. He looks upon the world to-day, and He says within Himself, "All these multitudes of precious souls will be lost, for there are so few reapers to gather them in. Here and there are men who, with prodigious energy, are reaping all they can, and all but fainting as they reap, and I am with them, and blessed sheaves are taken home, but what are these among so many? "Look, can your eye see it? Can even an eagle's wing fly over the vast fields, unreaped plains, without growing weary in the flight? There are the precious ears, they decay, they rot, they perish, they are ruined, to the loss of God and to their own eternal injury; and it grieves the Great Husbandman that it should be so. That is still the case to-day, and it ought to grieve us that it should be so, for His sake, and for the sake of our fellow-men. A multitude of precious souls were perishing, and this the Saviour lamented. The Saviour had yet another thought, namely, that the masses were accessible, for He used the same expression when the people came streaming out of Samaria to the well to hear Him, drawn out by curiosity created by the woman's story. He said to His disciples, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Now, when people are ready to hear the Word, then it is that the fields are ripe; and our Lord meant that as the wheat-ears do not oppose the sickle, but stand there, and a man has but to enter into the field, and use the sickle, and the result will surely follow, so there are times when nothing is wanted but to preach the gospel, and the souls which otherwise would perish, will surely be ingathered. I do not believe that at any time the world has had a dull ear to the gospel. Who have gathered the crowds? Such men as Augustine and Chrysostom. And what was their preaching but the gospel of Jesus Christ. Who have gathered them? Such men as John Huss, and Jerome, and Luther, and Calvin, and the like, about whom there was ever a sweet savour of Christ. Who have gathered them in this land? Who but our Wycliffe and our Knox? Who gathered them in later days but our Whitefield and our Wesley, men who spoke the common language of the people, and who had no theme but Jesus crucified. They will not go to hear your philosophies, they leave you and your philosophies to the spiders and the dry-rot; but preach Jesus, and His precious blood, and tell men that whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved, and they will hear you gladly. I heard from a missionary, who spends nights in working for his Lord in gin-palaces and the lowest resorts of the people, that he has scarcely ever met with an insult; the people received his tracts, and thanked him for his kindly words. I find it continually asserted by our city missionaries and those who visit cab ranks, or omnibus yards, or work among other public servants, that in general there is a willing attention to the gospel. The fields stand asking us to reap them, but there are not reapers enough; the grain perishes for want of labourers. The people are accessible. What country is there where the gospel cannot be preached? Fast closed was China, but you may go throughout the length and breadth of the land and talk of Christ, if you will. Japan is open to you. and Africa has laid bare her central secret; Spain, fast shut as with a seal, is this day set free, and Italy rejoices in the same liberty. All the world lies before the reapers of the Most High, but where are they? "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." The idea of immediate need is contained in the

figure, for the reaping of the harvest is to a considerable extent with the farmer a matter of now or never. "Ah," says he, "if I could postpone the harvest, if I could let it be gathered in by slow degrees, if we could work on till the harvest moon has gone and then through November and December till winter closes the year, then the scantiness of labourers would be a small evil; but there is a limited time in which the wheat can be safely housed, and it must be got in ere winter begins, or it is lost to us." There is no time for us to waste in the salvation of the sons of men. They will not live for ever; yon grey head will not tarry till you have told him the gospel, if you postpone the good news for the next ten years. We speak of what we hope may be accomplished for our race in half a century, but this generation will be buried ere that time. You must reap yon harvest at once, or it will be destroyed; it must be ingathered speedily, or it will perish. To-day, to-day, to-day, the imperative necessities of manhood appeal to the benevolence of Christians. To-day the sure destruction of the unbeliever speaks with pleading voice to the humanity of every quickened heart. "We are perishing, will you let us perish? You can only help us by bringing us the gospel now; will you delay?"

Chapter 16: Save the Children

Save the Children

I HOPE you do not altogether forget the Sabbath-school, and yet I am afraid a great many Christians are scarcely aware that there are such things as Sabbath-schools at all; they know it by hearsay but not by observation. Probably in the course of twenty years they have never visited the school, or concerned themselves about it. They would be gratified to hear of any success accomplished, but though they may not have heard anything about the matter one way or the other, they are well content. In most churches you will find a band of young and ardent spirits giving themselves to Sunday-school work; but there are numbers of others who might greatly strengthen the school who never attempt anything of the sort. In this they might be excused if they had other work to do; but, unfortunately, they have no godly occupation, but are mere killers of time, while this work which lies ready to hand, and is accessible, and demands their assistance, is entirely neglected. I will not say there are any such sluggards here, but I am not able to believe that we are quite free from them, and therefore I will ask conscience to do its work with the guilty parties.

Children need to be saved; children may be saved; children are to be saved by instrumentality. Children may be saved while they are children. He who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," never intended that His church should say, "We will look after the children by-and-by when they have grown up to be young men and women." He intended that it should be a subject of prayer, and earnest endeavour that children as children should be converted to God. The conversion of a child involves the same work of divine grace, and results in the same blessed consequences as the conversion of the adult. There is the saving of the soul from death in the child's case, and the hiding of a multitude of sins, but there is this additional matter for joy, that a great preventive work is done when the young are converted. Conversion saves a child from a multitude of sins. If God's eternal mercy shall bless your teaching to a little prattler, how happy that boy's life will be compared with what might have been if it had grown up in folly, sin, and shame, and had only been converted after many days! It is the highest wisdom and the truest prudence to pray for our children that while they are yet young their hearts may be given to the Saviour. To reclaim the prodigal is well, but to save him from ever being a prodigal is better. To bring back the thief and the drunkard is a praiseworthy action, but so to act that the boy shall never become a thief nor a drunkard is far better: hence Sabbath-school instruction stands very high in the lists of philanthropic enterprises, and Christians ought to be most earnest in it. He who converts a child from the error of his way, prevents as well as covers a multitude of sins.

And, moreover, it gives the church the hope of being furnished with the best of men and women. The church's Samuels and Solomons are made wise in their youth; Davids and Josiahs were tender of heart when they were tender in years. Read the lives of the most eminent ministers and you shall usually find that their Christian history began early. Though it is not absolutely needful,

yet it is highly propitious to the growth of a well-developed Christian character, that its foundation should be laid on the basis of youthful piety. I do not expect to see the churches of Jesus Christ ordinarily built up by those who have through life lived in sin, but by the bringing up in their midst, in the fear and admonition of the Lord, young men and women who become pillars in the house of our God. If we want strong Christians we must look to those who were Christians in their youth; trees must be planted in the courts of the Lord while yet young if they are to flourish well and long. The work of teaching the young has at this time an importance superior to any which it ever had before, for at this time there are abroad those who are creeping into our houses and deluding men and women with their false doctrine. Let the Sunday-schools of England teach well the children. Let them not merely occupy their time with pious phrases, but let them teach them the whole gospel and the doctrines of grace intelligently, and let them pray over the children, and never be satisfied unless the children are turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, and added to the church, and then I shall not be afraid of popery. Popish priests said of old that they could have won England back again to Rome if it had not been for the catechising of the children. We have laid aside catechisms, I think with too little reason, but at any rate, if we do not use godly catechisms we must bring back decided, plain, simple teaching, and there must be pleading and praying for the conversion of the children, the immediate conversion of children unto the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God waits to help us in this effort. He is with us if we be with Him. He is ready to bless the humblest teacher, and even the infant classes shall not be without a benediction. He can give us words and thoughts suitable to our little auditory. He can so bless us that we shall know how to speak a word in season to the youthful ear. And oh, if it be not so, if teachers are not found, or, being found, are unfaithful, we shall see the children that have been in our schools go back into the world like their parents, hating religion because of the tedium of hours spent in the Sunday-school, and we shall produce a race of infidels, or a generation of superstitious persons; the golden opportunity will be lost, and most solemn responsibility will rest upon us. I pray the church of God to think much of the Sunday-school. I beseech all lovers of the nation to pray for Sunday-schools; I entreat all who love Jesus Christ, and would see His kingdom come, to be very tender towards all youthful people, and to pray that their hearts may be won to Jesus. The theme lies very near my heart. It is one which ought to press heavily upon all our consciences. God must lead your thoughts fully into it; I leave it, but not till I have asked these questions:—What have you been doing for the conversion of children, each one of you? What have you done for the conversion of your own children? Are you quite clear upon that matter? Do you ever put your arms around your boy's neck and pray for him and with him? Father, you will find that such an act will exercise great influence over your lad. Mother, do you ever talk to your little daughter about Christ, and Him crucified? Under God's hands you may be a spiritual as well as a natural mother to that well-beloved child of yours. What are you doing, you who are guardians and teachers of youth? Are you clear about their souls? You week-day schoolmasters, as well as you who labour on the Sabbath, are you doing all you should that your boys and girls may be brought early to confess the Lord? I leave it with yourselves. You shall receive a great reward if, when you enter heaven, as I trust you will, you shall find many dear children there to welcome you into eternal habitations; it will add another heaven to your own heaven, to meet with heavenly beings who shall salute you as their teacher who brought them to Jesus. I would not wish to go to heaven alone—would you? I would not wish to have a crown in heaven without a star in it, because no soul was ever saved by my means—would you? There they go, the sacred flock of blood-bought sheep, the great

Shepherd leads them; many of them are followed by twins, and others have, each one, their lamb; would you like to be a barren sheep of the great Shepherd's flock? The scene changes. Harken to the trampings of a great host. I hear their war music, my ears are filled with their songs of victory. The warriors are coming home, and each one is bringing his trophy on his shoulder, to the honour of the great Captain. They stream through the gate of pearl, they march in triumph to the celestial Capitol, along the golden streets, and each soldier bears with him his own portion of the spoil. Will you be there? And being there will you march without a trophy, and add nothing to the pomp of the triumph? Will you bear nothing that you have won in battle, nothing which you have ever taken for Jesus with your sword and with your bow? Again, another scene is before me: I hear them shout the "harvest home," and see the reapers bearing every one his sheaf. Some of them are bowed down with the heaps of sheaves which load the happy shoulders: these went forth weeping, but they have come again rejoicing, bringing the sheaves with them. Yonder comes one who bears but a little handful, but it is rich grain; he had but a tiny plot and a little seed corn entrusted to him, and it has multiplied well according to the rule of proportion. Will you be there without so much as a solitary ear; never having ploughed nor sown, and therefore never having reaped? If so, every shout of every reaper might well strike a fresh pang into your heart as you remember that you did not sow, and therefore could not reap. If you do not love my Master, do not profess to do so. If He never bought you with His blood, do not lie unto Him, and come unto His table, and say that you are His servant; but if His dear wounds bought you, give yourself to Him; and if you love Him, feed His sheep and feed His lambs. He stands here unseen by my sight, but recognized by my faith; He exhibits to you the marks of the wounds upon His hands and His feet, and He says to you, "Peace be unto you! As My Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; and this know, that He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Chapter 17: Saving a Soul From Death

Saving a Soul from Death

IF any one of you has been the means of bringing back a backslider, it is said, "Let him know." That is, let him think of it, be sure of it, be comforted by it, be inspirited by it. "Let him know" it, and never doubt it. Do not merely hear it, let it sink deep into your heart. When an apostle inspired of the Holy Ghost says, "Let him know," do not let any indolence of spirit forbid your ascertaining the full weight of the truth. What is it that you are to know? To know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death. This is something worth knowing, it is no small matter. Why, we have men among us whom we honour every time we cast our eyes upon them, for they have saved many precious lives; they have manned the lifeboat or they have plunged into the river to rescue the drowning; they have been ready to risk their own lives amid burning timbers that they might snatch the perishing from the devouring flames. True heroes these, far worthier of renown than your blood-stained men of war. God bless the brave hearts! May England never lack a body of worthy men to make her shores illustrious for humanity. When we see a fellow-creature exposed to danger our pulse beats quickly, and we are agitated with desire to save him. Is it not so? But the saving of a soul from death is a far greater matter. Let us think what that death is! It is not non-existence; I do not know that I would lift a finger to save my fellow-creature from mere non-existence I see no great hurt in annihilation; certainly nothing that would alarm me as a punishment for sin. Just as I see no great joy in mere eternal existence, if that is all that is meant by eternal life, so I discern no terror in ceasing to be; I would as soon not be as be, so far as mere colourless being or not being is concerned. But eternal life in Scripture means a very different thing to eternal existence; it means existing with all the faculties developed in fulness of joy; existing not as the dried herb in the hay, but as the flower in all its beauty. To die in Scripture, and indeed in common language, is not to cease to exist. Very wide is the difference between the two words to die and to be annihilated. To die as to the first death is the separation of the body from the soul; it is the resolution of our nature into its component elements; and to die the second death is to separate the man, soul and body, from his God, who is the life and joy of our manhood. This is eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power; this is to have the palace of manhood destroyed and turned into a desolate ruin for the howling dragon of remorse, and the hooting owl of despair, to inherit for ever.

Now, remember your Saviour came to this world with two objects: He came to destroy death and to put away sin. If you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you are made like to Him in both these works: after your manner in the power of the Spirit of God you overcome death, by snatching a soul from the second death, and you also put away sin from the sight of God by hiding a multitude of sins beneath the propitiation of the Lord Jesus. The apostle does not say if you convert a sinner from the error of his ways you will have honour. True philanthropy scorns such a motive. He does not say if you convert a sinner from the error of his ways you will have the respect of the church and the love of the individual. Such will be the case, but we are moved by far nobler motives. The joy of doing good is found in the good itself: the reward of a deed of love is found in

its own result. If we have saved a soul from death, and hidden a multitude of sins, that is payment enough, though no ear should ever hear of the deed, and no pen should ever record it. Let it be forgotten that we were the instrument if good be but effected; it shall give us joy even if we be not appreciated, and are left in the cold shade of forgetfulness. Yea, if others wear the honours of the good deed which the Lord has wrought by us we will not murmur, it shall be joy enough to know that a soul has been saved from death, and a multitude of sins have been covered.

Let us recollect that the saving of souls from death honours Jesus, for there is no saving souls except through His blood. As for you and for me, what can we do in saving a soul from death? Of ourselves nothing, any more than that pen which lies upon the table could write the Pilgrim's Progress; yet let a Bunyan grasp the pen, and the matchless work is written. So you and I can do nothing to convert souls till God's eternal Spirit takes us in hand; but then He can do wonders by us, and get to Himself glory by us, while it shall be joy enough to us to know that Jesus is honoured, and the Spirit magnified. Nobody talks of Homer's pen, no one has encased it in gold, or published its illustrious achievements; nor do we wish for honour among men: it will be enough for us to have been the pen in the Saviour's hand with which He has written the covenant of His grace upon the fleshy tablets of human hearts. This is golden wages for a man who really loves his Master; Jesus is glorified, sinners are saved.

All that is said by the apostle is about the conversion of one person. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." Have you never wished you were a Whitefield? Have you never felt, in your inmost soul, great aspirations to be another McCheyne, or Brainerd, or Moffat? Cultivate the aspiration, but at the same time be happy to bring one sinner to Jesus Christ, for he who converts one is bidden to know that no mean thing is done; he has saved a soul from death, and covered a multitude of sins. And it does not say anything about the person who is the means of this work. It is not said, "If a minister shall convert a man, or if some noted eloquent divine shall have wrought it." If this deed shall be performed by the least babe in our Israel, if a little child shall tell the tale of Jesus to its father, if a servant girl shall drop a tract where some one poor soul shall find it and receive salvation, if the humblest preacher at the street corner shall have spoken to the thief or to the harlot, and such shall be saved, let him know that he that turneth any sinner from the error of his ways, whoever he may be, hath saved a soul from death, and covered a multitude of sins.

Let us long to be used in the conversion of sinners. James does not speak concerning the Holy Ghost in this passage, nor of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he was writing to those who would not fail to remember the important truths which concern both the Spirit and the Son of God; but yet we cannot do spiritual good to our fellow-creatures apart from the Spirit of God, neither can we be blessed to them if we do not preach to them "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." God must use us; let us pray and pine to be used; let us purge ourselves of everything that would prevent our being employed by the Lord. If there is anything we are doing, or leaving undone, any evil we are harbouring, or any grace we are neglecting, which may make us unfit to be used of God, let us pray the Lord to cleanse, and mend, and scour us till we are vessels fit for the Master's use. Then let us be on the watch for opportunities of usefulness; let us go about the world with our ears and our eyes open, ready to avail ourselves of every occasion for doing good; let us not be content till we are useful, but make this the main design and ambition of our lives.

Chapter 18: Restoring Those Who Have Erred

Restoring Those Who Have Erred "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins."—James 5:19-20.

JAMES is pre-eminently practical. If he were, indeed, the James who was called the Just, I can understand how he earned the title, for that distinguishing trait in his character shows itself in his Epistle; and if he were "the Lord's brother," he did well to show so close a resemblance to his great relative and Master, who commenced his ministry with the practical Sermon on the Mount. We ought to be very grateful that in the Holy Scriptures we have food for all classes of believers, and employment for all the faculties of the saints. It was meet that the contemplative should be furnished with abundant subjects for thought—Paul has supplied them; he has given to us sound doctrine, arranged in the symmetry of exact order; he has given us deep thoughts and profound teachings; he has opened up the deep things of God. No man who is inclined to reflection and thoughtfulness will be without food so long as the Epistles of Paul are extant, for he feeds the soul with sacred manna. For those whose predominating affections and imagination incline them to more mystic themes, John has written sentences aglow with devotion, and blazing with love. We have his simple but sublime Epistles,—epistles which, when you glance at them, seem in their wording to be fit for children, but when examined, their sense is seen to be too sublime to be fully grasped by the most advanced of men. You have from that same eagle-eyed and eagle-winged apostle the wondrous vision of the Revelation, where awe, devotion, and imagination may enlarge their flight, and find scope for the fullest exercise. There will always be, however, a class of persons who are more practical than contemplative, more active than imaginative, and it was wise that there should be a James, whose main point should be to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, and help them to persevere in the practical graces of the Holy Spirit.

Here is a special case of a backslider from the visible church: "if any of you" must refer to a professed Christian. The erring one had been named by the name of Jesus, and for awhile had followed the truth; but in an evil hour he had been betrayed into doctrinal error, and had erred from the truth. It was not merely that he fell into a mistake upon some lesser matter which might be compared to the fringe of the gospel, but he erred in some vital doctrine—he departed from the faith in its fundamentals. There are some truths which must be believed, they are essential to salvation, and if not heartily accepted the soul will be ruined. This man had been professedly orthodox, but he turned aside from the truth on an essential point. Now, in those days the saints did not say: "We must be largely charitable, and leave this brother to his own opinion; he sees truth from a different standpoint, and has a rather different way of putting it, but his opinions are as good as our own, and we must not say that he is in error." That is at present the fashionable way of trifling with divine truth, and making things pleasant all round. Thus the gospel is debased and another gospel propagated. I should like to ask modern broad churchmen whether there is any doctrine of any sort for which it would be worth a man's while to burn or to lie in prison. I do not believe they could give me an answer, for if their latitudinarianism be correct, the martyrs were

fools of the first magnitude. From what I see of their writings and their teachings, it appears to me that the modern thinkers treat the whole compass of revealed truth with entire indifference; and, though perhaps they may feel sorry that wilder spirits should go too far in free-thinking, and though they had rather they would be more moderate, yet, upon the whole, so large is their liberality, that they are not sure enough of anything to be able to condemn the reverse of it as a deadly error. To them black and white are terms which may be applied to the same colour, as you view it from different standpoints. Yea and nay are equally true in their esteem. Their theology shifts like the Goodwin Sands, and they regard all firmness as so much bigotry. Errors and truths are equally comprehensible within the circle of their charity. It was not in this way that the apostles regarded error. They did not prescribe large-hearted chancy towards falsehood, or hold up the errorist as a man of deep thought, whose views were "refreshingly original"; far less did they utter some wicked nonsense about the probability of their having more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds. They did not believe in justification by doubting, as our neologians do; they set about the conversion of the erring brother; they treated him as a person who needed conversion: and viewed him as a man who, if he were not converted, would suffer the death of his soul, and be covered with a multitude of sins. They were not such easy-going people as our cultured friends of the school of "modern thought," who have learned at last that the deity of Christ may be denied, the work of the Holy Spirit ignored, the inspiration of Scripture rejected, the atonement disbelieved, and regeneration dispensed with, and yet the man who does all this may be as good a Christian as the most devout believer! O God, deliver us from this deceitful infidelity, which while it does damage to the erring man, and often prevents his being reclaimed, does yet more mischief to our own hearts by teaching us that truth is unimportant, and falsehood a trifle, and so destroys our allegiance to the God of truth, and makes us traitors instead of loyal subjects to the King of kings.

It appears that this man, having erred from the truth, followed the natural logical consequence of doctrinal error, and erred in his life as well; for the twentieth verse, which must of course be read in connection with the nineteenth, speaks of him as a "sinner converted from the error of his way." His way went wrong after his thought had gone wrong. You cannot deviate from truth without ere long, in some measure, at any rate, deviating from practical righteousness. This man had erred from right acting because he had erred from right believing. Suppose a man shall imbibe a doctrine which leads him to think little of Christ, he will soon have little faith in Him, and become little obedient to Him, and so will wander into self-righteousness of licentiousness. Let him think lightly of the punishment of sin, it is natural that he will commit sin with less compunction and burst through all restraints. Let him deny the need of atonement, and the same result will follow if he acts out his belief. Every error has its own outgrowth, as all decay has its appropriate fungus. It is in vain for us to imagine that holiness will be as readily produced from erroneous as from truthful doctrine. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? The facts of history prove the contrary. When truth is dominant morality and holiness are abundant; but when error comes to the front godly living retreats in shame. The point aimed at with regard to this sinner in thought and deed was his conversion—the turning of him round, the bringing him to right thinking and to right acting. Alas! I fear many do not look upon backsliders in this light, neither do they regard them as hopeful subjects for conversion. I have known a person who has erred, hunted down like a wolf. He was wrong to some degree, but that wrong had been aggravated and dwelt upon till the man has been worried into defiance; the fault has been exaggerated into a double wrong by ferocious attacks upon it. The manhood of the man has taken sides with his error because he has been so

severely handled. The man has been compelled, sinfully I admit, to take up an extreme position, and to go further into mischief, because he could not brook to be denounced instead of being reasoned with. And when a man has been blameworthy in his life it will often happen that his fault has been blazed abroad, retailed from mouth to mouth, and magnified, until the poor erring one has felt degraded, and having lost all self-respect has given way to far more dreadful sins. The object of some professors seems to be to amputate the limb rather than to heal it. Justice has reigned instead of mercy. Away with him! He is too foul to be washed, too diseased to be restored. This is not according to the mind of Christ, nor after the model of apostolic churches. In the days of James, if any erred from the truth and from holiness, there were brethren found who sought their recovery, and whose joy it was thus to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins. There is something very significant in that expression, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth." It is akin to that other word, "Considering thyself also, lest thou also be tempted," and that other exhortation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." He who has erred was one of yourselves, one who sat with you at the communion table, one with whom you took sweet counsel; he has been deceived, and by the subtlety of Satan he has been decoyed, but do not judge him harshly, above all do not leave him to perish unpitied. If he ever was a saved man, he is your brother still, and it should be your business to bring back the prodigal and so to make glad your Father's heart. "Still for all slips of his," he is one of God's children, follow him up and do not rest till you lead him home again. And if he be not a child of God, if his professed conversion was a mistake, or a pretence, if he only made a profession, but had not the possession of vital godliness, yet still follow Him with sacred importunity of love, remembering how terrible will be his doom for daring to play the hypocrite, and profane holy things with his unhallowed hands. Weep over him the more if you feel compelled to suspect that he has been a wilful deceiver, for there is sevenfold cause for weeping. If you cannot resist the feeling that he never was sincere, but crept into the church under cover of a false profession, I say sorrow over him the more, for his doom must be the more terrible, and "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him." One what? One minister? No, any one among the brethren. If the minister shall be the means or the restoration of a backslider, he is a happy man, and a good deed has been done; but there is nothing said here concerning preachers or pastors, not even a hint is given—it is left open to any one member of the church; and the plain inference, I think, is this—that every church member seeing his brother err from the truth, or err in practice, should set himself, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to this business of converting this special sinner from the error of his way. Look after strangers by all means, but neglect not your brethren. It is the business, not of certain officers appointed by the vote of the church thereunto, but of every member of the body of Jesus Christ, to seek the good of all the other members. Still there are certain members upon whom in any one case this may be more imperative. For instance, in the case of a young believer, his father and his mother, if they be believers, are called upon by a sevenfold obligation to seek the conversion of their backsliding child. In the case of a husband, none should be so earnest for his restoration as his wife, and the same rule holds good with regard to the wife. So also if the connection be that of friendship, he with whom you have had the most acquaintance should lie nearest to your heart, and when you perceive that he has gone aside, you should, above all others, act the shepherd towards him with kindly zeal. You are bound to do this to all your fellow-Christians, but doubly bound to do it to those over whom you possess an influence, which has been gained by former intimacy, by relationship, or by any other means. I beseech you, therefore, watch over one another in the Lord, and when ye

see a brother overtaken in a fault, "ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Ye see your duty, do not neglect it.

It ought to cheer us to know that the attempt to convert a man who has erred from the truth is a hopeful one, it is one in which success may be looked for, and when the success comes it will be of the most joyful character. Verily it is a great joy to capture the wild, wandering sinner, but the joy of joys is to find the lost sheep which was once really in the fold and has sadly gone astray. It is a great thing to transmute a piece of brass into silver, but to the poor woman it was joy enough to find the piece of silver which was silver already, and had the king's stamp on it, though for awhile it was lost. To bring in a stranger and an alien, and to adopt him as a son, suggests a festival; but the most joyous feasting and the loudest music are for the son who was always a son, but had played the prodigal, and yet after being lost was found, and after being dead was made alive again. I say, ring the bells twice for the reclaimed backslider; ring them till the steeple rocks and reels. Rejoice doubly over that which had gone astray and was ready to perish, but has now been restored. John was glad when he found poor backsliding but weeping Peter, who had denied his Master, and cheered and comforted him, and consorted with him, till the Lord Himself had said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" It may not appear so brilliant a thing to bring back a backslider as to reclaim a harlot or a drunkard, but in the sight of God it is no small miracle of grace, and to the instrument who has performed it it shall yield no small comfort. Seek ye, then, those who were of us but have gone from us; seek ye those who linger still in the congregation but have disgraced the church, and are put away from us, and rightly so, because we cannot countenance their uncleanness; seek them with prayers, and tears, and entreaties, if peradventure God may grant them repentance that they may be saved.

Chapter 19: The Weeping Sower

The Weeping Sower

"AND weepeth." What means this word? As in the first words, "he that goeth forth," we see the man's mode of service, so here we note a little of the man himself. He goeth forth and weepeth. The man likely to be successful, is a man of like passions with ourselves, not an angel, but a man, for he weepeth. But then he is very much a man; he is a man of strong passions, weeping because he has a sensitive heart. The man who sleeps, the man who can be content to do nothing, and is satisfied with no result, is not the man to win sheaves. God chooses, usually, not men of great brain and vast mind, but men of true-hearted, deep natures, with souls that can desire, and pant, and long, and heave, and throb. It is a great thing that makes a genuine man weep. Tears do not lie quite so fleet with most of us; but the man who cannot weep cannot preach,—at least, if he never feels tears within, even if they do not show themselves without, he can scarcely be the man to handle such themes as those which God has committed to His people's charge.

If you would be useful you must cultivate the sacred passions; you must think much upon the divine realities, until they move and stir your souls; that men are dying, that Christ is dishonoured, that souls are not converted, that the Holy Ghost is grieved, that the kingdom does not come to God, but that Satan rules and reigns, all this ought to be well considered; our heart ought to be stirred until like the prophet we say, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." The useful worker for Christ is a man of tenderness, not a Stoic; not one who does not care whether souls are saved or not; not one so wrapped up in the thought of divine sovereignty as to be absolutely petrified; but one who feels as if he died in the death of sinners and perished in their ruin, as though he could only be made happy in their happiness, or find a paradise in their being caught up to heaven. The weeping, then, shows you what kind of man it is whom the Lord of the harvest largely employs; he is a man in earnest, a man of tenderness, a man in love with souls, a man wrapped up in his calling, a man carried away with compassion, a man who feels for sinners—in a word, a Christ-like man; not a stone, but a man who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a man of heart, a man ready to weep because sinners will not weep. "Why does he weep?" however, asks someone—"he is on an honourable work, and he is to have a glorious reward!" He weepeth as he goeth forth because he feels his own insufficiency. He did not know what a weak creature he was until he came into contact with other men's hearts. He often sighs within himself, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He fancied it was easy work to serve God, but now he is somewhat of Joshua's mind, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." Every effort that he makes betrays to him his own want of natural strength. Well may he weep. He never teaches in the Sunday-school class, he never prays at the sick bed, but what he feels ashamed when he has done his work that he did not do it better. He never takes a little child on his knee to talk to it of Jesus, but he wishes that he could have spoken more tenderly of the sweet gentleness of the Lover of little children. He is never satisfied with himself, for he forms a right estimate of himself, and he weeps to think that he is so poor an instrument for so good a Master.

Moreover, he weeps because of the hardness of men's hearts. He thought, at first, he should only have to tell these great truths and men would leap for joy. Have you never seen fancy pictures at the head of our missionary magazines, of respectable gentlemen dressed in black suits, landing out of boats manned by devout sailors, carrying Bibles in their hands, and these well-to-do evangelists are surrounded by Turks and Chinese, black people and copper-coloured people, who are running down to the sea-shore and taking these precious Bibles in their hands, and looking as if they had found a priceless treasure? Ah, it is all in the picture, it is nowhere else—the thing does not occur, natives of barbarous isles and heathen kingdoms do not receive the gospel in that way. Heralds of the cross have to do a deal of rough work, and toil on; for the gospel, which ought to be welcomed is rejected; and as there was no room for Christ in the inn, when He became incarnate, so there is no room for the gospel in the hearts of mankind. Yes, and this makes us weep, since where there should be so much readiness to accept, there is so much obstinacy and rebellion. The Christian worker weeps because, when he does see some signs of success, he is often disappointed. Blossoms come not to be fruit, or fruit half-ripe drops from the tree. He has to weep before God oftentimes, because he is afraid that these failures may be the result of his own want of tact or want of grace. I marvel not that any worker for Christ bedews the seed with his tears; the wonder is he does not lament far more than he does. Perhaps we should all weep more if we were more Christ-like, more what we should be; and perhaps our working would have about it diviner results if it came more out of our very soul, if we played less at soul-saving, and worked more at it; if we cast soul and strength, and every energy of our being into the work, mayhap God would reward us at a far greater rate.

"Bearing precious seed." Workers for God must tell out the gospel and keep to the gospel. You must continually dwell upon the real truth as it is in God's Word, for nothing but this will win souls. Now, in order to do this, workers for Christ must know God's truth. We must know it by an inward experience of its power as well as in the theory. We must know it as a precious truth. It must be precious seed to us, for which we should be prepared to die if it were necessary. We must understand it as being precious because it comes from God; precious because it tells to man the best of news; precious because sprinkled with the blood of Jesus; precious because Christ values it, and all holy men esteem it beyond all price. We must not deliver it with flippancy, not talk of solemn themes with levity, not tell out the gospel as though we were relating a mere tale from the Arabian Nights, a romance meant for amusement, or to beguile a passing hour. We who sow for God must sow in right good earnest, because the seed is more precious than we can ever estimate.

Work for God as those who know that the truth is a seed. Do not speak of it and forget it. Do not tell the gospel as though it were a stone, and would lie in the ground and never spring up. Tell out the truth with the firm conviction that there is life in it, and something will come of it. Be on the alert to see that something, and you will be the man who will have results. Our estimate of the preciousness of the seed will have much to do with the result of the seed. If I do not esteem thoroughly and heartily the gospel which I teach, if I therefore do not teach it with all my heart, I cannot expect to see the sheaves; but if, valuing the gospel, I tell it out as being priceless beyond all cost, and tell it out therefore with due vivacity and with an earnestness that brings me to tears, I am the man who shall come again rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me.

"He shall come again." What meaneth it but that he shall come again to his God? and this the worker should do after he has laboured. You sought a blessing: go and tell your God of what you have done, and if you have seen a blessing come, give Him thanks. Those men always come back to God with their sheaves who went from God with their seed. Some workers can see souls converted and take the honour to themselves, but never that man who sowed in tears; he has learned his own weakness in the school of bitterness; and now when he sees results, he comes back again, he comes back to God, for he feels that it is a great wonder that even a single soul should be convinced or converted under such poor words as his.

"He shall doubtless come again." Does not that mean in the longest and largest sense, He shall come again to heaven? He did as it were go forth from heaven. His body had not been there, but His soul had; He had communed with God. Heaven was His portion and His heritage, but it was expedient for Him a little while to tarry here for the sake of others, and so in a certain sense He leaves the heaven of His rest to go into the field of sorrow among the sons of men. But He shall come again. Ah! blessed be God, we are not banished by our service. We are kept outside the pearl gate for a little while—thanks be to God for the honour of being permitted thus to be absent from our joys for awhile; but we are not shut out, we are not banished, we shall doubtless come again. Here is your comfort: you go perhaps into the mission-field, you journey to the remotest parts of the earth to serve God, but you shall come again. There is a straight road to heaven from the most remote field of service, and in this you may rejoice.

"He shall come again with rejoicing." What will he rejoice in? I reckon that at the last, when Christian service shall be done, and Christian reward shall be rendered, the toils endured in serving God, the disappointment, and the racking of heart, will all make raw material for everlasting song. Oh, how we shall bless God to think that we were accounted worthy to do anything for Christ! Was I enlisted in the host that stood the shock of battle? Did the Master suffer me to have a hand upon the standard that waved so proudly aloft amidst the smoke of the battle? Did he suffer me to leap into the ditch, or scale the rampart of the wall amongst the forlorn hope; or did he even suffer me to watch by the baggage while the battle was raging afar off? Then am I thankful that he in any way whatever permitted me to have a share in the glory of that triumphant conflict. And then, as old soldiers show their scars, and as the warriors in many conflicts delight to tell of hair-breadth escapes in "the imminent breach," and of dangers grim and ghastly, so shall we rejoice as we return to God to tell of our going forth, and of our weeping when we carried the precious seed Coming back rejoicing with sheaves. I do not suppose that the reaper is to bring home all his sheaves on his own back, but, as an old expositor says, he comes with the wains behind him, with the waggons at his heels, bringing his sheaves with him. Yes, they are his sheaves. "How so? All saved souls belong to Christ; they are God's." Yes, but for all that they belong to the worker. There is a kind of sacred property which exists, and which God acknowledges in the case of men and women who bring souls to Christ. The true worker will be a reaper. I am afraid I have put this in the shape as though I were speaking to ministers, but I am not. If you are a true worker, you will be a reaper doubtless. Why? First, because the promise of God saith so. "My word shall not return to Me void: it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Secondly, God's honour in the gospel requires it. If there be a failure, and you have preached the true gospel rightly, it will be the gospel that will fail, and then God's attributes are all wrapped up in the gospel; it is His wisdom and His power; and shall God's wisdom be nonplussed, and God's

power be put back? Again, you must reap, because the analogy of nature assures you of it. The poor peasant whose little stock of corn is all but spent, takes a little wheat, which is very precious to him, and with many tears he drops it into the soil in the wintry months. But God gives him a harvest. In due time, in the mellow autumn days, he gathers in the sheaves, which reward him for his self-denial. It shall be so with you. God mocks not the husbandman; He appoints the seed-time, and He brings round the harvest.

Remember those who have gone before you in this service, who have proved this fact. Think of those you have known, who have not been unsuccessful; when, with hearts broken and bruised, they have spent their life-power in their Lord's work. Remember Judson and the thousands of Karens that this day sing of the Saviour whom he first taught to them. Think of Moffat in the kraals of the Bechuanas, not without glorious seals to his ministry. Think of our own missions in Jamaica, of the wonders and trophies of grace in the South Sea Islands, the multitudes that were turned to Christ during revival seasons in our own land, and in the United States, and you have proof that those that know how to reap and sow, and who go forth from God to the sowing, shall, beyond a doubt, come again rejoicing with their sheaves.

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