

How to Work for God With Success

by Catherine Booth

Catherine Booth emphasizes the necessity of preparation, earnestness, and total surrender for successful work in God's vineyard.

Scripture: James 1:5

Topics: "Spiritual Labor", "Faithful Service"

Description

Catherine Booth preaches on the needful qualifications for successful labor in God's kingdom. She emphasizes the importance of studying and adapting to the laws of the Spiritual Kingdom, praying for guidance, and working in a humble, teachable spirit. Booth highlights the necessity of getting the truth to the heart, driving it home with fervor and simplicity, and being earnest and desperate in one's efforts. She stresses the surrendering of all powers, complete abandonment, consecration of money for God's work, and the willingness to give up anything that hinders. Booth also discusses the reward of faithful labor, including God's care in sickness, triumphant entrance into His kingdom, and the joy of spiritual children.

Transcript

MATT. 21:28.--"Son, go work today in my vineyard."

LUKE 14:23.--"Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

I AM to speak this afternoon of some needful qualifications for successful labour; and I say:

First, that there are certain laws which govern success in the kingdom of Grace as well as in the kingdom of Nature, and you must study these laws, and adapt yourself to them. It would be in vain for the husbandman to scatter his seed over the unbroken ground or on pre-occupied soil. You must plough and harrow and put your seed in carefully, and in proper proportion, and at the right time, and then you must water and weed and wait for the harvest. And just so in Divine things. Oh! we shall find out, by-and-bye, that the laws of the Spiritual Kingdom are quite as certain and unerring in their operation as the laws of the Natural Kingdom, and, perhaps, a great deal more so; but, through the blindness and obtuseness and unbelief of our hearts, we could not, or would not, find them out. People get up and fluster about, and expect to be able to work for God without any thought or care or trouble. For the learning of earthly professions they will give years of labour and thought, but in work for God they do not seem to think it worth while to take the trouble to think and ponder, to plan and experiment, to try means, to pray and wrestle with God for wisdom. Oh! no; they will not be at the TROUBLE. Then they fail, grow discouraged,

and give up.

Now, my friends, this is not the way to begin to work for God. Begin as soon as you like--begin at once--but begin in the right way. Begin by praying much for Him to show you how, and to equip you for the work, and begin in a humble, submissive, teachable spirit.

Study the New Testament with special reference to this, and you will be surprised how every page of it will give you increased light. You will see that God holds you absolutely responsible for every iota of capacity and influence He has given you, that He expects you to improve every moment of your time, every faculty of your being, every particle of your influence, and every penny of your money FOR Him. When once you get THIS light, it will be a marvelous guide in all the other particulars and ramifications of your life. Study your plans. How men in earthly warfare study plans of stratagem, and adopt all manner of measures in order that they may take the enemy by surprise! But, alas! how little care and attention God's people give to taking souls; and yet it is FAR HARDER WORK TO TAKE SOULS THAN IT IS TO TAKE CITIES.

How surprised I have often been at the assumption of people who, perhaps, never gave one hour's consecutive thought in their lives to the best means of doing certain work, and yet they will pronounce an opinion right off as to certain modes and measures which have been tried and proved successful in the lives of some of the most successful labourers for God. They will say, 'Oh! I don't believe in it.' 'Oh! it is all nonsense, ridiculous, wrong!' while, perhaps, those people whom they condemn have been pleading, and weeping, and studying, and experimenting, and almost sacrificing their heart's blood to try to find out the best means of winning souls for Christ.

I shall never forget the shock that came over me once in a large gathering of Christian people, when a gentleman, who occupied a somewhat prominent position, was giving out a hymn which contained a verse something about spending one hour in watching with Jesus. He stopped in the middle of this hymn, and said words to this effect: 'I am afraid we are verily guilty here. I do not know that I dare say I ever watched one consecutive hour with Jesus in my life.' I shall never forget it. My cheeks burned with shame. I said, 'Oh! my God, if these are the leaders, we need not wonder at the people.' A man occupying such a position to dare to say it! The Lord have mercy on him. No wonder the Lord's work is done in such a bungling way! I say those who want to be successful in winning souls require to watch not only days but nights. They want much of the Holy Ghost, for it is true still, 'This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.' We have grown wiser than our Lord now-a-days; but, I tell you, it is the same old-fashioned way, and if you want to pour out living waters upon souls, either publicly or privately, you will have to drink largely at the fountain yourself, and have them very ready to let out! If you have not, your talk will be as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. Oh! it makes my soul weep tears of blood to think of the misdirected effort that will be put forth this very Christian Sabbath. Plenty of labour, but how little comes of it! All because it is cramped, and ruined, and misdirected, for want of thought and prayer, and a single eye for the salvation of souls. May God rouse us up to this, and make us willing to think, and labour, and learn, and wrestle, and sacrifice in order that we may do it.

Then, further, the second qualification for successful labour is power to get the truth HOME to the HEART.

Not to DELIVER it! I wish the word had never been coined in connection with Christian work. 'Deliver' it, indeed--THAT is not in the Bible! No, no; not deliver it; but drive it home--send it in--make it FELT. That is your work; not merely to say it--not quietly and gently to put it before the people. Here is just the difference between a self-consuming, soul-burdened Holy Ghost, successful ministry, and a careless,

happy-go-lucky, easy sort of thing, that just rolls it out like a lesson, and goes home, holding itself in no way responsible for the consequences. Here is ALL the difference, either in public or individual labour. God has made you responsible, not for delivering the truth, but for GETTING IT IN--getting it home, fixing it in the conscience as a red-hot iron, as a bolt, straight from His throne; and He has placed at your disposal the power to do it, and if you do not do it, BLOOD will be on your skirts! Oh! this genteel way of putting the truth! How God hates it. 'If you please, dear friends, will you listen? If you please, will you be converted? Will you come to Jesus? or shall we read just this, that, and the other?'--no more like apostolic preaching than darkness is like light.

God says, 'GO AND DO IT: compel them to come in. That is your work. I have nothing to do with the measures by which you do it, providing they are lawful.'

'Use just the same diligence, earnestness, and determination that you would if you were resolutely set on any human project, and always be sure that I will be with you to the end of the world. Never doubt My presence when you are set on My business. I will be with you, and I will give you success.' Do it--the Lord help us to get the truth home!

This was the way with Paul, and this was the way with Jesus. Paul says: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Oh! what a beautiful insight this gives us into his ministry. Why do you persuade men, Paul? 'Because I know the terror of the Lord that is coming on, and because we thus judge that, if One died for all, then were all dead. Therefore, I persuade men.' He did not give up when he had put it before them. He carried them on his heart, and he says, "That by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." He wept it in, as well as drove it in with his logic, and his eloquence, and with the power of the Holy Ghost in him. Make it go in--make your words felt; don't talk to them in the sickly, languid way that makes no impression--make them know it. If you have not enough of the Holy Ghost for this, go to your closet till you have, and then come and drive the Word home to their conscience as a two edged sword, dividing asunder soul and spirit. The second thing indispensable to success is SIMPLICITY: naturalness in putting the truth.

You have not only to get it home, but, in order to do this, give it them simply and naturally. If I were asked to put into one word what I consider to be the greatest obstacle to the success of Divine Truth, even when uttered by sincere and real people, I should say, STIFFNESS. It seems as if people, the moment they come to religion, assume a different tone, a different look, and manner--in short, become unnatural. People sometimes come to me, and say, 'Oh! I would give the world to be natural, but I have got into this way of talking to people.

It seems as though I cannot be natural. Can you help me?' I say, 'Yes, I can help you, by this advice. Determine, by the help of God, that you will break the neck of this bondage. I will tell you how to begin. Begin with your family. Break off right in the middle of conversation on earthly matters, and begin to talk about their souls or your own experience, or drop down on your knees and begin to pray.' 'Oh! but it would be such a break.' It should not be a break to talk to your Father.

If you are in the spirit of it there will be no break. This will help you more than anything else. Determine that you will overcome this sanctimoniousness, which is the curse of a great deal of the religion of this day. We want SANCTIFIED HUMANITY, not sanctimoniousness. You want to talk to your friends in the same way about religion as you talk about earthly things. If a friend is in difficulties, and he comes to you, you do not begin talking in a circumlocutory manner about the general principles on which men can secure

prosperity, and the sad mistakes of those who have not secured it; you come straight to the point, and, if you feel for him, you take him by the button-hole, or put your hand in his, and say, 'My dear fellow, I am very sorry for you; is there any way in which I can help you?'

If you have a friend afflicted with a fatal malady, and you see it and he does not, you don't begin to descant on the power of disease and the way people may secure health, but you say, 'My dear fellow, I am afraid this hacking cough is more serious than you think, and that nasty flush on your cheek is a bad sign. I am afraid you are ill--let me counsel you to seek advice.' That is the way people talk about earthly things. Now, just do exactly so about spiritual things. If your friend is a spiritual bankrupt, just tell him so.

Tell him where he is going, and that the reckoning day is coming, and that he will be in God's prison house very soon, and that, if the creditor once gets hold of him and shuts him up, he will never get out till he has paid the uttermost farthing. If your friend has a spiritual disease, tell him so, and deal just as straight and earnestly with him as you would about his body. Tell him you are praying for him, and the very concern that he reads in your eyes will wake him up, and he will begin to think it is time he was concerned about himself. Try to attain this simple, easy, natural way of appealing to people about their souls. I believe if all real Christians would attain this and act upon it this country would be shaken from end to end.

Thirdly, you must be in EARNEST--DESPERATE, I would like to say.

And, indeed, friends, settle this as a truth, that you will never make any other soul realise the verities of eternal things any further than you realise them yourself. You will beget in the soul of your hearer exactly the degree of realisation which the Spirit of God gives to you, and no more; therefore, if you are in a dreamy, cozy, half-asleep condition, you will only beget the same kind of realisation in the souls who hear you. You must be wide awake, quick, alive, feeling deeply in sympathy with the truth you utter, or it will produce no result.

Here is the reason why we have such a host of stillborn, sinewless, ricketty, powerless spiritual children. They are born of half-dead parents, a sort of sentimental religion, which does not take hold of the soul, which has no depth of earth, no grasp, no power in it, and the result is a sickly crop of sentimental converts. Oh! the Lord give us a real, robust, living, hardy Christianity, full of zeal and faith, which shall bring into the kingdom of God lively, well-developed children, full of life and energy, instead of these poor, sentimental ghosts that are hopping around us. Oh! friends, we want this vivid realisation ourselves. If we have it we shall beget it in others. Oh! get hold of God. Ask Him to baptize you with His Spirit until "the zeal of His house eats you up." This Spirit will burn His way through all obstacles of flesh and blood, of forms, proprieties, and respectabilities of death and rottenness of all descriptions! He will burn His way through, and produce living and telling results in the hearts of those to whom you speak, earnestness--such earnestness that it comes to desperation--like that of Paul, who counted all things but dross; yea, and who counted not his life dear unto him. That was the secret. He counted not his life, nor anything that constitutes life--liberty, pleasure, enjoyment, friends, reputation, ease, &c., all was on the altar, all was in the scale. He counted none of those things dear unto him, so that he might win the perfection, the fullness of Christ in his own soul, and the salvation of the souls around him.

Oh! what a LAUGHING-STOCK TO HELL is a light, frivolous, easy, lukewarm professor. Oh! what a shame and puzzle to the angels in Heaven, and what a supreme disgust to God. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Oh! what will that be? Talk about shame! Think of that! Shame! Some of you feel it going into the streets for

God. You feel it when a few people see you kneel down here! Think of being spewed out of the mouth of God before an assembled universe. What will that be? God helping me, I will avoid that. I will sooner hang with Jesus on the cross, between two thieves, than I will bear that shame. "I WOULD THOU WERT COLD OR HOT!"

Some of you say, in your letters, that you will have this whole-heartedness. You say that you have given up all, and that you are consecrating yourself to a life of labour. Now, be HOT. I know you will burn the fingers of the Pharisees. Never mind that. I know you will fire their consciences like Samson's foxes did the corn. Never mind that. BE HOT. God likes hot saints. Be determined that you will be hot. They will call you a fool: they did Paul. They will call you a fanatic, and say, 'This fellow is a troubler of Israel'; but you must reply, 'It is not I, but ye and your father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord.' Turn the charge upon them. Hot people are never a trouble to hot people. The hotter we are the nearer we get, and the more we love one another. It is the cold people that are troubled by the hot ones. The Lord help you to be HOT.

Then another indispensable condition is the surrendering of ALL OUR POWERS.

There must be no holding back. "Cursed be he that holdeth back his sword from blood." That curse is resting on Cristendom today. Oh! they will thrust the sword a little way in, but they will not go into the core. They dare not draw blood--the soldiers of this age--for their lives. They dare not touch a man to the quick, because, alas! they are looking to themselves, and thinking of what people will say of THEM, instead of thinking of what God will say of them. You must not be afraid of blood if you are to be a true warrior of the Jesus Christ. You must not be afraid to, say, if need be, "Oh! generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" You must not be afraid to say, if need be, "You have made my Father's house a den of thieves," if you save some of them by doing it.

Oh! this accursed sycophancy; I was going to say, this accursed fear to brave the censure of the world--this accursed making good evil and evil good, as if God were altogether such an one as ourselves. Don't you think He sees through the vile sham? Oh! my friends, if we don't mend in this respect, He will come in judgement before long, and we shall find out then the difference between the precious and the vile, if we do not find out before. If you want to be a successful worker, you must make up your minds to begin with, that, you will be CRUCIFIED.

As a dear minister once said to somebody, when he was arguing with him about being so hard in the pulpit, 'I don't care.' 'Oh!' said the other, 'Don't you know what became of "Don't care?"' 'Yes,' he said, 'He was crucified, and I am ready to be crucified alongside of him.' When you are in the right, don't care. You can but be crucified, and it will soon be over; and then the Book says that they that "suffer" with Him "shall also reign with Him," and they shall be "glorified together." It would be a wonderful thing to be glorified alone, but, oh, think of being glorified together with Jesus!

A gentleman said lately, 'I have been thinking a great deal about the glory. It is a wonderful thing that glory that is to follow. This would be worth a man sitting on the dunghill all his life to obtain it.' I looked at him, and thought, perhaps you are nearer to it than you think, and perhaps I am, too. Ah! it is a wonderful thing, that glory that is to follow. Then let us be willing to suffer with Him and for Him. Make up your mind to be crucified at the start, and then it will be easy.

Further, complete abandonment is a condition of successful labour.

It is so in anything. What would you think of a soldier who was always reckoning how much it was to cost, and when he should get back, or whether it was worth the sacrifice? You would say, 'He is of no use to the British Army. We want men who will go in to win at all costs.' Now, God wants men and women who will go in to win, who believe in winning, who know they have the power to win, and who count ALL THINGS loss in comparison with winning. Do you want success? If you do not come to that abandonment first, you will never get it.

Fourthly,--You must give up, kick out of the way, trample underfoot all that hinders.

REPUTATION. Perhaps there are some ministers here. There were some last Sunday, and there were some the Sunday before. Some of you have written, and others talked, to me. You say, 'It would be such an entire breaking from one's circle.' Exactly. Some say, 'You see, the inevitable consequences of setting up this high standard would be a constant running of the sword into some of your best hearers and your best friends.' Exactly; that is giving your sword to blood. You would not think much of drawing the blood of an enemy--it is the blood of your FRIENDS that is the test! I know all about it; I have been there. I was there a long while once. It was my own sore spot. The Devil said, 'If you begin preaching they will call you an impudent woman,' and I felt it would be better almost to go to hell than have that said about me. He said, 'They will put you in the newspapers, and say all manner of coarse and vulgar things about you;' and God only knows what that was to my soul; but I battled and struggled with it for a long while, until I said, at last, 'Lord, I don't care what they call me--I give myself to Thee to win souls.' Have I ever regretted it? Shall I ever regret it? No; He will take care of your reputation. Give it up to Him, my brother, The Scribes and the Pharisees never had anything good to say of Jesus coming in the flesh. Give up your reputation--follow Him. If it must be, decide to go after Him to Gethsemane, to Golgotha and the Cross. Never mind--follow Him. Give up your reputation.

Then, your habits. How ashamed some of you will be who have made the mere Paris-born frivolities of society stand in the way of your consecration to Christ; and yet people who do this say they are Christians. I don't know; I cannot believe it. There is drinking; they will have a glass of wine. Very well, you can have it; but you shall not have the wine of the Kingdom. Professors will dress like the prostitute of Paris. Very well; but they shall not be the bride of the Lamb. He will not walk in the streets with them, nor sit at the same table. You can go to parties where it is said there are only religious people, but where you know all manner of gossip and Christless chit-chat is going on, which you would be awfully ashamed the Master should hear, and from which you retire with no appetite for prayer. You can go to all this, but I defy you to have the Holy Ghost at the same time. I won't stop to argue it; I ONLY KNOW YOU CANNOT DO IT. All that will have to be put aside and given up. You say, 'That is a sore point.' Yes; I know that is driving the sword to blood.

Fifthly,--You must consecrate your money to be used for God.

I once heard an old veteran saint say, and I thought it was extravagant at the time, 'I consider the use of money the surest test of a man's character.' I thought, No, surely his use of his wife and children is a surer test than that; but I have lived to believe his sentiment. Hence, you see how human experience justifies Divine wisdom--"the love of money is the root of all evil." So it is, in one form or other. God never uses anybody largely until they have given up their money. I simply state a fact. We know it is so by experience and the history of God's people. You must give up your money as an end: saving it for its own sake, or the gratification of your selfish purposes or those of your children--it must be all given to God, to whom it belongs, being entirely used in His service. If you want to be a successful labourer for souls, you will have

to do that at the threshold. Give up your money to the Lord. If you think it right to keep some of it, keep it to use it for Him as you go; and be as strict with yourself, to your Heavenly Father, as you would be with your secretary or clerk to yourself, and then you will be all right,

It is a narrow and difficult path, I tremble for you who have got it, and I am glad I have not; but as you have got it, I give you the best advice I know. It is an awful thing to have it, but the next best thing is to consecrate it and use it to His glory; and if you do not, it will eat into your soul as doth a canker. To your spiritual nature it will be as a cancer is to your physical nature. They are Paul's words, not mine.

I must say a word about THE REWARD.

You think I am always driving at you to do. Yes, because you need it. The Lord knows I do not find you do any too much. Some of you I am heartily ashamed of. Some of you need driving so that you ought to thank God for the rod. Paul says, "Shall I come unto you with a rod?" He was obliged to do it with some people. It is not an enviable thing to have to do; but we dare not, when God sets us work to do, shirk it; but there is a bright side--there is the reward. 'What!' you say, 'does He pay you?' Yes, good wages--pressed down--heaped together! He says, 'The man who remembereth the poor (do you think He means only their bodies?) I will remember him; I will make his bed--a tender allusion--in his sickness. He will shake it up; spread the feathers, and smooth the pillows, as no earthly nurse, not even the tenderest, wife, can do. "I will make his bed in his sickness." You will want Him then, brother! You are very independent, some of you, now, but you will want Him then. "I will make his bed in sickness." I will put "underneath him" My "everlasting arms." He will cause you to triumph in the swellings of Jordan. That will be grand, will it not? He will give you a triumphant entrance into His kingdom, those of you who have gone, out in loving solicitude and anxious sympathy to labour for the souls of your fellow-men. He will minister unto you an abundant entrance, and then--what? He will give you CHILDREN; and the barren woman shall have more children than she that hath a husband.

Oh! the whole world is akin here. Every man and woman wants children. They are especially a heritage from the Lord. Nothing can make up for the want of children. The poorest parents, living in the humblest hut, would not sell you their children, and the rich man, who has twenty thousand a year, would give it for a son or for a daughter, when he cannot have one. All human beings want children. Now, then, the Lord will give you children. A mother--even a sanctified mother--I suppose, cannot help feeling proud, or, rather, glad and thankful, when she shows good, obedient, and godly children to her friends. I do not believe that God wants to grind this out of us. I believe he delights in it Himself, just as He delighted to show His servant Job to the Devil. "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" Ah! was He not proud of him? And He has been proud of His Jobs ever since. God has put this feeling in us, and it is a right feeling when it is sanctified. We cannot help but be proud of godly and obedient children; but what will it be to show your spiritual children to the angels? How shall you feel when you gather the spiritual family which God has given you round the throne of your Saviour, and say, "Here am I and the children whom Thou has given me?"--the children won through conflict, and trial, and strife, such as only God knew; children "begotten in bonds," as Paul says--children born in the midst of the hurricane of spiritual conflict, travail, and suffering, and cradled, rocked, fed, nurtured, and brought up at infinite cost and rack of brain, and heart, and soul; but now, here we are, Lord. We are here through it all. Here am I and the children whom Thou hast given me. How shall you feel? Shall you be sorry for the trouble? Shall you regret the sacrifice? Shall you murmur at the way He led you? Shall you think He might have made it a little easier, as you are sometimes tempted to do now? Oh! no, no!--THE CHILDREN! THE CHILDREN! you shall have children! Won't that be reward enough? Bless God!

Oh! sometimes, when I am passing through conflict and trial, in connection with a work which brings plenty of it behind the scenes, I encourage myself in the Lord, and remember those who have gone home sending me their salutations from the verge of the river, telling me they will wait and look out for me, and be the first to hand me to the Saviour when I get there. Will not this be reward enough? Even so, Lord, Amen,

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