

As a Personal Worker and Preacher

by George Kulp

The sermon highlights the vital role of personal ministry and unwavering faith in transforming lives and communities for Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 28:20

Topics: "Persistent Faith", "Evangelism"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the importance of persistent faith and evangelism, using the story of Mr. Smith's challenging ministry in the Windsor Circuit as an example. Despite facing spiritual destitution and indifference, Mr. Smith's unwavering faith and dedication to saving souls led to remarkable conversions and revival. Through prayer meetings and personal outreach, Mr. Smith demonstrated the power of faith in action, inspiring others to join in the work of God. His fervent belief in the transformative power of faith and prayer, even in the face of opposition and doubt, serves as a powerful example of true Christian enthusiasm and dedication.

Transcript

"Let him that heareth say, Come."

"Lo, I am with you alway."

"Run speak to that young man."

"Let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, saveth a soul from death and hideth a multitude of sins?"

At the Conference of 1820, Mr. Smith, having passed the usual examinations, was admitted into the connection. Immediately afterwards he was married and proceeded with Mrs. Smith to the Windsor Circuit. Here the circumstances were peculiarly trying. Villages and towns on every side inadequately provided with evangelical instruction. Spiritual destitution prevailed. In his own charge there was great and manifest torpor. Many had a name to live and were dead; and not a few of the members had never known the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Those who do not know the perversity of human nature might have anticipated that in such a state of things, the labors of Mr. Smith would have been hailed with a universal welcome. It should be particularly noted, that he was now no theorist, however he might have been esteemed such at an early period of his ministerial life. Many of those to whom he was now called to

minister, must have been acquainted with his devoted zeal, and his considerable success; and all might, without difficulty, have ascertained how far his experiments had previously tended to the accomplishment of the great object of the Christian ministry. Yet (to employ the testimony of one who was intimately acquainted with him at this period) "his efforts, by some individuals, were, for a time, neither understood nor appreciated. This circumstance rendered the struggles of his faith far more painful to himself, while it delayed no less the general blessing for which he ardently longed. It appeared to me, as if settled unbelief, though only in a few, weighed down his own faith much more than the coldness and indifference of a far greater number. It seemed to hang upon him (and I think I have heard him so describe it) 'as a dead weight,' encumbering and retarding his spirit, when it was struggling to get free and plead with God for the congregation. Under such pressure I have even known him to request such as were indisposed to believe to leave the church, with a tone and earnestness of manner which must have thrilled every mind.

That he was instant in season and out of season, always on the alert for souls, will be gathered from the following extract from a letter. It will be seen he not only went where he was needed, but where he was needed the most:

"Windsor, Sept. 15, 1820. -- I am going to Uxbridge today, God willing; a place nine miles distant, formerly connected with Windsor, but which has been given up about two years. I was there last week, making the necessary inquiries. I believe it is a providential opening, and I anticipate much good. Several are longing for the bread of life. Last Tuesday night I visited a place near Windsor, where I hope good will be done. When I came, I saw that very little indeed was done, and also that much needed doing. I was almost ready to despond; but I recovered myself by considering that the work is God's, that He has all power, and that He is willing and solicitous to save the whole world. Last Sunday afternoon, it pleased God to set two souls at liberty, while I was preaching from, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' One woman got down upon her knees while I was preaching, and kneeled until we concluded. I then hastened to her, and said, 'Woman, are you happy?' She said, 'I am.' 'When did you receive this happiness?' 'While you were preaching,' she said, 'I believed that God had pardoned all my sins.' I then called upon the friends to sing, 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,' etc. They who were going out stopped, and assisted us to praise God. The other woman did all she could to conceal her emotions, but she was observed by her leader, to whom she confessed that God had then set her soul at liberty. I was not acquainted with this until afterwards. Last night I was renewing the tickets. A young man was present who had not found peace. I told him God was ready to pardon him then. While I was at prayer, he began to be in deep distress, and cried aloud. I concluded, that those who wished to go might have an opportunity, and requested any who were so disposed to remain with us. The young man continued on his knees, unwilling to rise without a sense of pardon. I and one of the leaders remained with him until, after a smart struggle, it pleased God to set his soul at liberty. He then sang, 'O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me.' We all triumphed in the mercy of our God. I do not intend to despond. God can and does, and will work. We have a few in this place truly pious, who long for the prosperity of Zion. The people are very kind and are solicitous to make us comfortable. We are in good health through mercy and are trusting in God for full Salvation.

A daily prayer-meeting at five o'clock in the morning, and a similar meeting after the Sunday evening preaching, were some of the methods for the revival of the work of God which Mr. Smith employed almost from the time of his arrival at Windsor. They were attended by the happiest results; and to them he, in common with the most successful ministers of modern Methodism, was greatly indebted for his

usefulness. "In different places," says one of his familiar friends, in special reference to this period of his life, "and according to the different circumstances in which Mr. Smith found himself, or the people among whom he was stationed, his plan of action, in reference to that revival of the work of God which was everywhere his first object, was doubtless subject to various modifications. But, in general, I suppose, as it pre-eminently was wherever I have witnessed his labors, the fruits of his ministry were most decisive and abundant in meetings for prayer." These were usually to him seasons of extraordinary physical as well as spiritual efforts, though there were interesting instances of a different class. "On one occasion, after returning from a meeting, where nine persons had obtained entire sanctification the same night, he remarked, "I was not equal to strong exertion and chiefly said, 'Thy blood was shed for this very purpose; cleanse them, Lord.'

But it was not only by his own individual efforts that Mr. Smith acted upon others. Among the numbers converted by his ministry there were always some who imbibed his views and Spirit, and who engaged themselves after his example in holding forth the Word of life. It was indeed part of his plan to encourage others to work for God. He aided them by his counsel, and prayers, maintained an intercourse with them when separated, and made occasional visits to London and elsewhere, in order to assist their exertion, they looking to him for direction and encouragement.

Nor was it merely among the host of souls of whose conversion he was the direct instrument, that he found the partakers of his spirit, and the willing agents of his plans. The Christianity of many others he succeeded in modeling; to occasional and untaught fervor he often gave principle and direction, and kindled scriptural and persevering zeal in hearts which before had been comparatively cold and inert. It was especially in meetings for prayer that such characters were formed. There was in his atmosphere at these times a moral stimulus so powerful that sincere minds could scarcely fail to catch a portion of his Heaven-descended spirit. Here they saw his principles brought into actual practice, and the value of his plans attested by their skillful and anticipated operation. Every such meeting was a series of striking and triumphant experiments; and it was thus, mainly, that there was formed that class of individuals whom he, from the most prominent feature in their character, was accustomed to designate "The Praying Men." Of the majority of these the probability is that had it not been for his influence they would have remained, however personally upright and sincere, of little service to the Church of God.

"Among those who engaged his particular attention and care," says the friend from whom I have already quoted largely, "were the soldiers of the regiments of Life Guards who were successively stationed at the neighboring barracks. To many of that fine body of men he was made eminently useful. He felt for their naturally exposed situation, and rejoiced in their profession of godliness, as marked by more decision, and maintained under severer temptations, than ordinary. Nor was he, I think, insensible to the manly bearing of these Christian soldiers. Certainly, if there was any quality he admired that was not in itself religious, it was manliness under all its forms. We love to see the feelings of the man thus disclosing themselves in the Christian. And thus I remember being pleased, when the habitual current of his thoughts and conversation was interrupted (though but for a moment) by a natural expression of pleasure at the interesting appearance of some Eton boys, whom he seemed to regard with just the sort of complacency which a father might have expressed had they been his own. Several of these pious soldiers were men of no common faith and prayer; and using such means as were calculated to spread religion."

Of the work of God among this interesting class of persons, Mr. Smith thus speaks, in a letter to his parents, dated January 11, 1821: "On the Sunday evening before Christmas day, a corporal in the Horse Guards found peace' He was awakened about three weeks before at our chapel. His father is a Methodist

at Cleckheaton. Last Tuesday week, he had an affecting discovery of inbred sin, and the whole of the week longed for a clean heart. This morning, at our half-past five o'clock prayer-meeting, God cleansed him from all sin, and he made confession before all present: such a conclusion, I think, I never heard. I hope he will be very useful. On Christmas day, another soldier and his wife were awakened while I was praying in our chapel. The Wednesday following they came to our house with Corporal E____, a pious man, who obtained entire sanctification about three weeks ago, and it pleased the Lord to set them both at liberty. Several other soldiers are earnestly seeking pardon."

Among those for whom Mr. Smith was peculiarly interested was a corporal who had once enjoyed religion, but who had forsaken God and His people. His wife was a pious woman; she mourned deeply on his account, and prayed for his restoration. It was one day impressed on Mr. Smith's mind to visit this man, and accompanied by Mrs. Smith, he walked as far as the door of his house, where he met his wife. "Well, Mrs. B.," said he, "where is your husband?" With much concern, she replied, "Yonder he is, going to the races." "I will follow him," he said, and without entering the dwelling he hastily set off in the direction indicated. The corporal soon perceived that he was being followed, and, quickening his pace, he succeeded, before Mr. Smith came up, in getting into a ferry-boat which would have taken him across the river to within a few minutes' walk of the race-course. The boatman, however, had to put back for another passenger, and thus brought him near the friend whom he so much wished to shun, who solemnly accosted him with, "Did you pray about it before you set out?" The inquiry fastened on his conscience. He went to the races, and was wretched. "Did you pray about it before you set out?" still seemed to ring in his ears. When Mr. Smith next visited him he was in deep distress. Mr. Smith invited him to unite himself with the people of God. He did so, and never rested until the Lord healed his backslidings and restored him. He became useful and a class-leader in the regiment.

In the letter from which our last extract was made, Mr. Smith speaks of the work in general: "I have still to lament an almost general want of effort in these parts. It is lifting work to get the people to God; but help is laid upon one that is mighty to save. When the Spirit comes there must be a moving. We are encouraged to expect the Holy Spirit, not only by the sure Word of promise, but also by what we receive. Thank God, there is a striving among the people. Some are teased and are ready to leave the society; or at least have had thoughts of it; but others are looking to God, panting, laboring for God. Several are on the point of receiving entire sanctification, and a few have received that blessing. Others have obtained pardon. The last time I was at Uxbridge, two souls found peace and one the time before, who shortly afterwards was cleansed from all sin, as he and I were praying together in his bedroom. He has just begun to preach, and I hope will be useful. For two years he was a backslider. This day fortnight I and my wife went to take tea with Brother S., whose wife a short time ago was a persecutor. On my return from Stoke, after preaching, I thought God would save her. After a few inquiries, we began to pray. The power of God came upon her: she groaned for mercy, and, after a struggle, God set her soul at liberty. Her husband found peace a few months before. A young woman found peace at one of our morning meetings, about a fortnight ago. God, you see, is working. Since I wrote last, I have changed with one of the Reading preachers. At the prayer-meeting after evening preaching at Reading, four or five found peace. But it is rather strange work in these parts for souls to be in distress and to get liberty. I hope it will not continue so, and that it will not be opposed, but desired and labored for. My soul is happy in God. I am looking for a greater personal salvation, and for glorious outpourings of the Spirit upon the people. I confidently expect them."

As a still more striking illustration of the scriptural character of Mr. Smith's piety, the following remarks of the friend whose communications have already so enriched these pages are quoted:

"Of all that he did or suffered, of all that he experienced or enjoyed, faith was the great, the animating principle; and the truth of God (which is nothing more nor less than the reality of things) was the groundwork and basis of his faith. To believe, as it constitutes the whole of religion, -- the highest attainments of which are only a development of that all-comprehending principle, -- constituted the substance of all his exhortations to others, and the scope of all his own prayers and exertions. To the efficacy of faith he set no limits. 'If,' said he, 'a man were as black as a devil, and had upon him all the sins that were ever committed, if he would but begin to believe, God would raise him.' Again, I have heard him say, 'That it the way I rise. I will not suffer myself to dwell on my unfaithfulness; if I did, I should despond.' I have known him quote with great seriousness a remark of Mr. Wesley to the effect that most persons perish through despondency. On my asking him as to his confidence of final salvation he replied that he 'had no doubt whatsoever on the subject, for he was determined to believe.' And as he set no bounds to the efficacy of faith, so he appeared to set none to its application. When I have been engaged in writing a letter he has called out to me, 'Write in faith.'

In the month of June he paid a visit to his old friends at Brighton, and was deeply affected, to use his own words, "with the goodness of God, in the kindness of the people." On the Sunday evening on which he preached there, the Spirit of God descended powerfully on the congregation. Many were deeply convicted of sin; fifteen or sixteen persons obtained pardon, and the meeting was continued till nearly midnight. On the following day he attended the quarterly meeting of the circuit at Lewes. In the evening he preached, and the Lord granted the congregation a baptism of fire. His subject was the love of God to man: and he urged on his hearers the duty of loving God in return, from the consideration that this alone would fit them for Heaven. For himself, he said, in his own pathetic style, he did love God, and he intended to get to Heaven. He then appealed to the people, whether they would go with him. When he paused, as for a reply, there was, of course, profound silence, and every heart seemed filled with the deepest emotion. Then, turning to his friend, Mr. Calder, he said, in a thrilling tone, "Brother Calder, will you go to Heaven?" As well as he could articulate for weeping, he replied, "By God's grace, I will." "Hear him," cried Mr. Smith with a loud voice, "he says he will;" and then, as if putting a seal to a solemn covenant, he feelingly added, "Amen, and now for all of you. God is here to receive your vow, and help you to fulfill it." The effect was magical; awe appeared to rest on every spirit, and multitudes testified that they had never before observed such an impression from simple and anointed eloquence.

Nothing can convey to the reader who never witnessed the exertions of the man, the degree of intense fervor to which he was wrought by the time he had finished his sermon. He seemed rapt, inspired; and, to a certain degree, his auditors were carried with him. He then called on the Rev. John Pipe, who had succeeded him in the Brighton circuit, to pray. The Spirit of intercession had come on him also, and with extraordinary earnestness he besought God to bless the circuit. Full of confidence and ardor, and forgetful of everything but the amplitude of the petition, Mr. Smith pronounced an Amen like the sound of thunder: A second petition that God would bless the nation, elicited a second and still louder AMEN. But when he who prayed, extending the exercise of his faith and charity, called on God to bless the world, Mr. Smith uttered at the extreme of his voice an AMEN which thrilled through every heart; and seemed to infuse the energy of his faith into those that heard it, "making," says Mr. Calder, "the three most memorable Amens that I, or I think, any other human being ever heard." When the first service was concluded, he proceeded to assist in the prayer service that followed, and had the happiness of seeing that night about twenty souls delivered from the burden of their sins, as two more were the following morning.

Doubtless many will call Mr. Smith an enthusiast. If by enthusiasm be meant the single, devoted, unwavering pursuit of one object, the concentration of mighty and sanctified affections, the laboring night and day with many tears for the salvation of men, the literally counting all things but loss for Christ, the expecting the fulfillment of the promises of God in their most ample sense, the ready and constant preference of the things of eternity to those of time, however worthy, be consulted; if, in short, the loving God with all the heart, and serving Him with all the strength, be enthusiasm, -- John Smith was an enthusiast. But the term which describes such a character, far from being a term of reproach, is a title of the highest dignity; and there is no instructed Christian who would not covet to gain it, or would not glory in it when acquired. To use the words of Mr. Smith's attached friend: "He who best secures an end which many aim at, may well be presumed to have employed the best, and therefore the most rational, means. And, consequently, since the salvation of souls is the end of the Christian ministry, his known and eminent success, compared with that of most others, may well establish the superior fitness of the means employed by him. In other words, it transfers the suspicion of enthusiasm to those" who imagine that a pointless generalizing harangue of some theological subject, that the mere "letting off a sermon," is to convey "life from the dead," and to demolish the bastions of Satan and unbelief. The "gentle theologues," whose nerves are strung with such exquisite sensibility that they are alarmed at the slightest ripple on the dead calm of human affections, and yet expect to accelerate the period when the sea shall roar and the fullness thereof, are the real visionaries. Whether he were beside himself, it was for God, or whether he were sober, it was for our cause, for the love of Christ constrained him.

The labors of Mr. Smith with the soldiers was wonderfully owned of God, and in the ranks of the English army have been men who honored God while they served their country. Hedley Vicars and Havelock were men of God.

Bad men pretend that religion does not make men better. They say that a man can be just as good without being a professing Christian, as he can if he take on him the vows of religion. All the while, these men keep their eyes on professors. They demand of them a higher style of morality. They condemn members of the church for conduct in which they themselves indulge. When censured for their inconsistency, they reply, "Oh! I don't profess anything; that man does." Some object to religion, that it makes men effeminate. But the bravest of troops and the most victorious of soldiers have been religious men. Men are hard to meet, and dangerous to contend with, who sing the psalms of David as a battle-cry; who hang the Bible to their horses' bridles; who mount with prayer, and shout to the host, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon!"

General Havelock commanded a corps of religious men. The troops drank no intoxicating drinks; they swore no oaths. The morning and evening were saluted with prayer. The cant name given to this corps was "The Saints." More than this, the general was the chaplain. On the Lord's day, the regiment formed a hollowed square, and the commander preached. All this was told to the government at London. A commission was sent to inquire into these strange doings. The report came that the charges were all true, the Saints prayed and the commander preached. "But," it was added, "no troops in India are as well drilled, as well equipped, as efficient. In time of trouble, the cry is, 'Bring out the Saints. They are never drunk. Havelock never blunders.'" It was added, as if prophesied, "Should trouble arise in India, Havelock's corps will be the main reliance of the government."

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