

The Special Campaigner

by Samuel Logan Brengle

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the evangelist's role in winning souls for Christ and the need for heart preparation, spiritual authority, and humility in their work.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Divine Calling", "Evangelism"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the vital role of the evangelist or campaigner in the ministry, sharing his personal journey from aspiring lawyer to devoted servant of God. He recounts his initial resistance to preaching, the transformative experience of being sanctified, and the realization that his calling was to evangelism. Brengle highlights the unique responsibilities of the campaigner, focusing solely on winning souls for Christ, and the importance of spiritual preparation and humility in this role. He encourages campaigners to recognize their divine calling and to trust in God's presence and power as they labor in the field. Ultimately, he calls for support and understanding from the church community to empower these workers in their mission.

Transcript

I

'And He gave some . . . Evangelists.' For many years now my own work has been the work of an evangelist or campaigner. For five years, long before I met The Army, I resisted the Lord's call to preach. I wanted to be a lawyer and enter politics. To my youthful mind -- foolish, darkened, proud, ambitious -- all the supreme prizes of life lay in that direction. I respected preachers, but not their job; it looked small to me, not a man's size. But at last a woe, a solemn, inescapable, eternal woe faced me if I preached not, and I surrendered. Then I discovered that there were prizes, position, and places of power in the ministry. But the job of the Evangelist seemed to me to be beneath the dignity of a full-orbed man. Then one day, when in an agony of desire for purity of heart and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, God graciously sanctified me. The Holy Spirit took possession of my yielded, open heart. Christ was revealed in me, and a great passion for the saving and the sanctifying of men burned within me. About that time a multimillionaire had built one of the finest churches in my native State, and the congregation through him was looking for a pastor. To my surprise I found that the vice-president of my old university had recommended me, and one day I received a call to the pastorate of that Church. I was elated. I felt that God Himself had opened a great door of opportunity and of usefulness to me.

While still considering this call, I went three hundred miles to a holiness convention to sit under the ministry of some great teachers whose books had blessed me. Then God laid His hand upon me, and I knew that I was not to accept the call to that Church, and lo! I found that which I had least esteemed, had most despised, was the work to which God called me, and for which He had set me apart. I must be an Evangelist. I felt ordained to this.

I was young, unknown, in debt for a part of my education. I had no one to advise me. I was utterly alone and had no assurance that any Church would welcome my evangelistic services. But on my knees I talked it over with the Lord as I would with an earthly friend, and by faith into evangelistic work I plunged. Doors opened and I saw many souls saved and sanctified, and from that work, within ten months, I was led into The Salvation Army, where I found myself in London, blacking boots, scrubbing floors, selling 'War Crys,' as a Cadet in the International Training Garrison. After receiving my Commission, I returned to the U.S.A. and had command of three Corps, two Divisions under a Provincial Commander, and was Provincial Secretary or Chancellor of the two principal Metropolitan Provinces in that country, with Headquarters in Chicago and New York.

But God's 'gifts and calling are without repentance,' and the inner urge to do the work of an Evangelist was ever with me. The worst storm that ever struck us in America had overtaken The Army. Our ranks were broken. Our people were full of distress and anxious questionings. Our battle-line from the Atlantic to the Pacific, three thousand miles long, was in confusion, and I felt, when in my office, a consuming desire to get out on the Field, to meet our people face to face, to hearten, reassure and cheer, to exhort, to teach, to lead them, distraught and sore perplexed, into 'the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ,' and to win sinners to the Saviour. One day I sought and obtained an audience with the Consul, asked her if I might speak to her about myself and my work as I would of any Officer, and then told her my convictions. Within three months I was appointed National Spiritual Special, and for about thirty years now I have been a Campaigner.

It has not been an easy job. It has oftentimes been lonely and wearying to the point of exhaustion. It has taxed my mind, challenged my will and utmost devotion, drunk up my spirit, drained me to the dregs till there seemed to be no virtue left in me, and I have had to slip away into solitude, like my Master, to the mountains, for quiet communion, for the replenishing of exhausted reserves of power and the renewing of all life's forces. It has been a fight but not a defeat, Hallelujah! I have not been forsaken! His presence has not failed me. He has assured me that the battle was not mine but His, and He has called on me to trust Him and be not afraid. Again and again I have heard His whisper in my heart: 'Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Be steadfast, unmovable. Your labor is not in vain in the Lord.' Sometimes the whisper has been sweet and full of comfort as the tender, cooing voice of a mother to a weary, distressed child; and sometimes it has been sharp and imperative as the staccato notes of a military command on a field of battle. I have not been mollicoddled. I have never been for an instant permitted to think I was God's pet, and that I could expect special favors from Him. He has called me to share His cross, and to endure hardness as a good Soldier, not pleasing myself, not entangling myself with worldly interests or affairs that did not concern me, but to attend strictly to the work He has given me to do.

And now, out of some thirty years of experience as a Campaigner, let me write.

II

When they sought him where he had last been seen, all they could find was a small streak of ashes; he had been consumed by the flood of flame which swept over the doomed city, burning to ashes in five hours 69,000 houses that in five minutes had been cast to the ground by the heaving earth. He was an exporter of silk, a wealthy Parsee from India, with great warehouses in Yokohama. One month before the earthquake and fire, the Swedish Officer, who told me this story, had visited him in his office asking for a donation to help The Salvation Army in its work for sailors in that city. He listened to the Officer's plea, and then replied: 'If you can tell me one thing you Officers of The Salvation Army do which has not as its ultimate object the winning of men to Christ, then I will give you a liberal donation. But you cannot do it; you wear uniform, you march the streets, you carry banners, you beat drums and blow instruments, you conduct Meetings, you open Shelters and Soup Kitchens, you build Citadels, conduct Training Colleges, Rescue Homes, Men's Shelters, publish books and papers and solicit money for just one object -- to help you win men to Christ and make them followers of Him. I do not believe in Christ. I do not need your Christ. I am rich, but I will give you nothing.' A month later the earthquake, the all-consuming fire and the poor little handful of ashes!

The proud, self-complacent Parsee had grasped the central purpose of The Salvation Army. All its Officers and workers have or should have this supreme object always in full view. But while there is one spirit and one object, there are manifold ministries to express that spirit and secure that object. There are 'some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.' Some serve tables as did Stephen, Philip, and others; and some give themselves wholly to the ministry of the word and prayer, as did Peter and the other Apostles (Acts vi. 1-8). But all have one object to attain -- the winning of souls from sin through faith in Christ, and the binding of them in vital union to Christ, and making them channels of His saving grace to others.

The Evangelist or Campaigner is the man who probably more directly than any other labors to accomplish this great work. The Corps Officer, the Divisional Commander, the Departmental Officer, the Commissioner, has many executive and administrative duties which do not bear so directly upon the saving of men as does the work of the Campaigner. Their work is a vitally essential work in preparing the way for and conserving the work of soul-winning, but much that they do bears only indirectly upon the Salvation of men. The Campaigner's work, however, is direct, immediate, unchanging. This one thing he does. The burden of caring for the flock, of collecting and administering finance, of erecting buildings, of directing affairs, does not fall upon him as upon others. His sole burden, his one responsibility, is for the souls of men. It is a secret burden, a responsibility which is laid upon him and which he assumes in the silence and secret place of his own soul. It is elusive, known and measured only by God and himself. It cannot be measured by a yard stick. It cannot be weighed on man-made scales. It cannot be tabulated in statistics. The Campaigner belongs to a Divine order, just as the prophet and the Apostle. He has a Divine calling. His gift is a Divine bestowment, and he himself is one of God's gifts to men. 'And He gave some -- Evangelists ' -- counterparts of The Salvation Army Campaigner, who is the Evangelist of the New Testament and whose sole business is the saving of men, the perfecting of the saints and the building up of the body of Christ on earth, which is composed of all true Christians.

If we judge the importance of his work in the mind of God by the place Paul assigns him when he mentions the various orders of ministry, then he stands next to the Apostles and Prophets and before the pastor and teacher.

When we consider his work we will see that this relationship is perfectly logical. He receives the revelation, the good news of God's love and plan of Salvation through faith in Christ from Apostles and Prophets, and

then by bold and loving presentation of this revelation, this good news, he saves men and turns them over to the pastor to be shepherded, and to the teacher to be instructed in the things of God. His great work is not the training of souls but the saving of them; having accomplished this work he passes on to other fields of labor. He does not erect the building, he provides the material; or, to change the figure, he lays the foundations, others build thereon. He is a fisher of men: his business is to catch them. He is a reaper of souls on the world's vast harvest fields; that is his one work, and to that he should give himself with great joy and full and unwearied devotion. He may have other gifts, and, if so, he should not neglect them but cultivate them to the full and make them contribute to and support his God-given gift and calling as an Evangelist. He should not minify his calling. He should not vex and discourage himself by comparing it with that of other men, with that of the Divisional Commander and Commissioner who handle great affairs, control great commands, and direct their own appointments within their commands, as I knew one Special do, much to his own distress and the crippling, in some measure, of his splendid powers.

The Campaigner should magnify his office. It is true that he is a lone man without authority to command and direct others and administer great business, and at times he may be oppressed with a feeling of his own insignificance. But he has spiritual authority, the authority which eternal truth bestows and with which God clothes chosen workers who work and labor in the power of the Holy Ghost. However small he may feel within himself, he must not minify his office. His work is vital. It is God-ordained, and he is walking in the footsteps of the Master who, without any semblance of worldly power, or man-made authority, was the first Campaigner.

His one weapon is 'the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.' His enduement of power for his work is none less than God the Holy Ghost. The Almighty Holy Ghost goes with him to hearten, to guide, to give him insight and wisdom and courage, boldness in attack, patience in difficulty, and faith and hope in the blackest night. However lonely at times he may feel, he is not alone, 'never, no, never alone.' He must stir up his faith and recognize the Divine Presence, humbly acknowledge his dependence, boldly claim Divine help, and draw freely upon the Divine resources placed at the disposal of his faith.

III

It is the Campaigner himself, and not the details of his campaign, about which I write. Probably no two Campaigners if left to themselves would plan a campaign exactly alike. Personally, I have never attempted anything spectacular, although I would not discourage this in others. Pageants, spectacular marches and uniforms, striking subjects, special music, all may be most useful to reach the crowd. Cottage Prayer Meetings and Half Nights of Prayer before a Campaign, with personal visitations, announcements, and invitations, I have found most helpful. They stir up interest and a devout, prayerful, expectant spirit that make victory assured.

The Campaigner cannot make this initial preparation himself. The Divisional Officer, the Corps Commander, Locals and Soldiers, should do this work in advance of the Campaign, and if they do it with heart and soul, and their own hearts are prepared for the visitation of the Spirit, victory is already in sight.

In all my campaigns it is this preliminary work and this heart preparation for which I have pleaded, and for which I have in secret prayed.

IV

1. The Campaigner must spend time and give all diligence to the preparation of his own heart. If his own heart is broken, he can then break the hearts of others. If his heart is aflame, he can kindle a flame in other hearts. A striking program, a brilliant address, a beautiful song may dazzle the crowd and play on the surface of their emotions, but it is only the passion of the Cross that will bring them in contrition and brokenness of heart to the Cross. Other things are important, but this preparation of the heart is the one thing without which all other things are empty and vain.

The Founder always blamed himself if he did not succeed. It is true that other factors are at work for or against the campaign, and the Campaigner should not be too quick to assume all the blame of failure. We know there were places where the Master could do not mighty works, because unbelief frustrated Him. And so it may be with the Campaigner. But usually, if he is warm and tender, joyous and bold, and 'full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,' no man will be able to stand before him. Results rich and enduring will reward his labor (Joshua i. 5).

The Campaigner must study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. God is not a hard Master, but He will not, cannot, lightly approve us. We must not presume on His good will: but with all watchfulness and diligence so work that He can approve, and that our hearts will not condemn, but will reassure us.

2. The Campaigner must exercise his spiritual sense lest, having eyes to see, he see not, and having ears to hear, he hear not. He must have eyes that pierce through appearances: that can see the horses and chariots of fire where others see only the arrogant, encircling hosts of Syria. He must have ears to hear the assuring voice of his Captain, and distinguish it from the voices of self-interest, of expediency, and of the fiend who sometimes simulates, and is 'transformed into an angel of light.'

The Apostle speaks in commendation of those 'who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' But beyond discernment of good and evil, the Campaigner must have eyes to see victory where others see foredoomed defeat. The smallest crowd may have immeasurable possibilities in it. A Luther, a Wesley, a William Booth, may be looking out through the eyes of some little child or some awkward, shy, or mischievous, adolescent boy. An Elizabeth Fry, a Catherine Booth, or a Hannah Ouchterlony may spring forth from the chrysalis of some reserved girl who listens with rapt attention. Personally, I seldom speak to a congregation without thinking that I may be addressing directly or indirectly some one who shall yet be a prophet of the Highest, a herald to nations. Possibly I have been somewhat influenced by the results of my first sermon in my first appointment as a young preacher. In that first service two people, a young man and a young woman, yielded to Christ, were saved, and the young man, principal of the public school, preached for me before the end of the year and went later as a missionary to India. Sometimes we reach them indirectly. We get some nobody saved and God uses that nobody to reach somebody who becomes 'Great in the sight of the Lord.' Let us have no hesitancy in permitting our spiritual imagination to reinforce our faith and enkindle our hope and so sustain our courage in the face of massed and mocking foes and threatened defeat.

3. The true Campaigner is a humble man. He seeks nothing for himself. He is willing for others to carry off the so-called prizes of this life. He is not a lord over Christ's heritage; he is a shepherd of the sheep, 'an ensample to the flock.' He holds no dominion over the faith of his brethren, but he is a helper of their joy (2 Corinthians i. 24). Like John the Baptist, he is quite willing to decrease, if only Christ increases; his joy is that of the friend of the Bridegroom (John iii. 29, 30). Like Paul he is jealous over his comrades with a godly jealousy, desirous above all things to espouse them to one husband and present them as a chaste

virgin to Christ; and he fears lest by any means that old serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtlety, should corrupt them from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians xi. 2, 3). And like Epaphras, he labors fervently in prayer that they may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Colossians iv. 12).

4. Finally, this lonely man, coming to a Division and Corps, with no power to command, but only to preach and pray, to help and inspire and to seek the lost, should be received as the messenger of God, and supported by love and prayers and understanding sympathy and helped in his mission in every possible way, that Christ may be glorified, souls won, little children gathered into the fold, and all comrades quickened and sanctified.

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