

1

What Is It to Win a Soul?

I PURPOSE, dear brethren, if God shall enable me, to give you a short course of lectures under the general head of 'The Soul-winner.' Soul-winning is the chief business of the Christian minister; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every true believer. We should each say with Simon Peter, 'I go a fishing,' and with Paul our aim should be, 'That I might by all means save some.'

We shall commence our discourses upon this subject by considering the question — What is it to win a soul?

This may be instructively answered by describing what it is not. We do not regard it to be soul-winning to steal members out of churches already established, and train them to utter our peculiar Shibboleth: we aim rather at bringing souls to Christ than at making converts to our synagogue. There are sheep-stealers abroad, concerning whom I will say nothing except that they are not *'brethren'*, or, at least, they do not act in a brotherly fashion. To their own Master they must stand or fall. We count it utter meanness to build up our own house with the ruins of our neighbours' mansions; we infinitely prefer to quarry for

ourselves. I hope we all sympathize in the large-hearted spirit of Dr Chalmers, who, when it was said that such and such an effort would not be beneficial to the special interests of the Free Church of Scotland, although it might promote the general religion of the land, said, 'What is the Free Church compared with the Christian good of the people of Scotland?' What, indeed, is any church, or what are all the churches put together, as mere organizations, if they stand in conflict with the moral and spiritual advantage of the nation, or if they impede the kingdom of Christ? It is because God blesses men through the churches that we desire to see them prosper, and not merely for the sake of the churches themselves.

There is such a thing as selfishness in our eagerness for the aggrandisement of our own party; and from this evil spirit may grace deliver us! The increase of the kingdom is more to be desired than the growth of a clan. We would do a great deal to make a Paedo-baptist brother into a Baptist, for we value our Lord's ordinances; we would labour earnestly to raise a believer in salvation by free-will into a believer in salvation by grace, for we long to see all religious teaching built upon the solid rock of truth, and not upon the sand of imagination; but, at the same time, our grand object is not the revision of opinions, but the regeneration of natures. We would bring men to *Christ* and not to our own peculiar views of Christianity. Our first care must be that the sheep should be gathered to the great Shepherd; there will be time enough afterwards to secure them for our various folds. To make proselytes is a suitable labour for Pharisees: to beget men unto God is the honourable aim of ministers of Christ.

In the next place, we do not consider soul-winning to be accomplished by hurriedly inscribing more names upon our church-roll, in order to show a good increase at the end of the year. This is easily done, and there are brethren who use great pains, not to say arts, to effect it; but if it be regarded as the Alpha and Omega of a minister's efforts, the result will be

deplorable. By all means let us bring true converts into the church, for it is a part of our work to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them; but still, this is to be done to disciples, and not to mere professors; and if care be not used, we may do more harm than good at this point. To introduce unconverted persons to the church, is to weaken and degrade it; and therefore an apparent gain may be a real loss.

I am not among those who decry statistics, nor do I consider that they are productive of all manner of evil; for they do much good if they are accurate, and if men use them lawfully. It is a good thing for people to see the nakedness of the land through statistics of decrease, that they may be driven on their knees before the Lord to seek prosperity; and, on the other hand, it is by no means an evil thing for workers to be encouraged by having some account of results set before them. I should be very sorry if the practice of adding up, and deducting, and giving in the net result were to be abandoned, for it must be right to know our numerical condition. It has been noticed that those who object to the process are often brethren whose unsatisfactory reports should somewhat humiliate them: this is not always so, but it is suspiciously frequent.

I heard of the report of a church, the other day, in which the minister, who was well known to have reduced his congregation to nothing, somewhat cleverly wrote, 'Our church is looking up.' When he was questioned with regard to this statement, he replied, 'Everybody knows that the church is on its back, and it cannot do anything else but look up.' When churches are looking up in that way, their pastors generally say that statistics are very delusive things, and that you cannot tabulate the work of the Spirit, and calculate the prosperity of a church by figures.

The fact is, you *can* reckon very correctly if the figures are honest, and if all circumstances are taken into consideration;

if there is no increase, you may calculate with considerable accuracy that there is not much being done; and if there is a clear decrease among a growing population, you may reckon that the prayers of the people and the preaching of the minister are not of the most powerful kind.

But, still, all hurry to get members into the church is most mischievous, both to the church and to the supposed converts. I remember very well several young men, who were of good moral character, and religiously hopeful; but instead of searching their hearts, and aiming at their real conversion, the pastor never gave them any rest till he had persuaded them to make a profession. He thought that they would be under more bonds to holy things if they professed religion, and he felt quite safe in pressing them, for 'they were so hopeful.' He imagined that to discourage them by vigilant examination might drive them away, and so, to secure them, he made them hypocrites. These young men are, at the present time, much further off from the Church of God than they would have been if they had been affronted by being kept in their proper places, and warned that they were not converted to God. It is a serious injury to a person to receive him into the number of the faithful unless there is good reason to believe that he is really regenerate. I am sure it is so, for I speak after careful observation. Some of the most glaring sinners known to me were once members of a church; and were, as I believe, led to make a profession by undue pressure, well-meant but ill-judged.

Do not, therefore, consider that soul-winning is or can be secured by the multiplication of baptisms, and the swelling of the size of your church. What mean these despatches from the battle-field? 'Last night, fourteen souls were under conviction, fifteen were justified, and eight received full sanctification.' I am weary of this public bragging, this counting of unhatched chickens, this exhibition of doubtful spoils. Lay aside such numberings of the people, such idle pretence of certifying in half a minute that which will need the testing of a lifetime.

Hope for the best, but in your highest excitements be reasonable. Enquiry-rooms are all very well; but if they lead to idle boastings, they will grieve the Holy Spirit, and work abounding evil.

Nor is it soul-winning, dear friends, merely to create excitement. Excitement will accompany every great movement. We might justly question whether the movement was earnest and powerful if it was quite as serene as a drawing-room Bible-reading. You cannot very well blast great rocks without the sound of explosions, nor fight a battle and keep everybody as quiet as a mouse. On a dry day, a carriage is not moving much along the road unless there is some noise and dust; friction and stir are the natural result of force in motion. So, when the Spirit of God is abroad, and men's minds are stirred, there must and will be certain visible signs of the movement, although these must never be confounded with the movement itself. If people imagine that to make a dust is the object aimed at by the rolling of a carriage, they can take a broom, and very soon raise as much dust as fifty coaches; but they will be committing a nuisance rather than conferring a benefit. Excitement is as incidental as the dust, but it is not for one moment to be aimed at. When the woman swept her house, she did it to find her money, and not for the sake of raising a cloud.

Do not aim at sensation and 'effect.' Flowing tears and streaming eyes, sobs and outcries, crowded after-meetings and all kinds of confusions may occur, and may be borne with as concomitants of genuine feeling; but pray do not plan their production.

It very often happens that the converts that are born in excitement die when the excitement is over. They are like certain insects which are the product of an exceedingly warm day, and die when the sun goes down. Certain converts live like salamanders, in the fire; but they expire at a reasonable temperature. I delight not in the religion which needs or creates a hot head. Give me the godliness which flourishes upon Calvary rather than upon

Vesuvius. The utmost zeal for Christ is consistent with common-sense and reason: raving, ranting, and fanaticism are products of another zeal which is not according to knowledge. We would prepare men for the chamber of communion, and not for the padded room at Bedlam. No one is more sorry than I that such a caution as this should be needful; but remembering the vagaries of certain wild revivalists, I cannot say less, and I might say a great deal more.

What is the real winning of a soul for God? So far as this is done by instrumentality, what are the processes by which a soul is led to God and to salvation?

I take it that one of its main operations consists *in instructing a man that he may know the truth of God.*

Instruction by the gospel is the commencement of all real work upon men's minds. 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' Teaching begins the work, and crowns it, too.

The gospel, according to Isaiah, is, 'Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.' It is ours, then, to give men something worth their hearing; in fact, to instruct them. We are sent to evangelize, or to preach the gospel to every creature; and that is not done unless we teach them the great truths of revelation. The gospel is good news. To listen to some preachers, you would imagine that the gospel was a pinch of sacred snuff to make them wake up, or a bottle of ardent spirits to excite their brains. It is nothing of the kind; it is news, there is information in it, there is instruction in it concerning matters which men need to know, and statements in it calculated to bless those who hear it. It is not a magical incantation, or a charm, whose force consists in a collection of sounds; it is a revelation of facts and truths which require knowledge and belief.

The gospel is a reasonable system, and it appeals to men's understanding; it is a matter for thought and consideration, and it appeals to the conscience and the reflecting powers. Hence, if we do not teach men something, we may shout, '*Believe! Believe! Believe!*' but what are they to believe? Each exhortation requires a corresponding instruction, or it will mean nothing. 'Escape!' From what? This requires for its answer the doctrine of the punishment of sin. 'Fly!' But whither? Then must you preach Christ, and His wounds; yea, and the clear doctrine of atonement by sacrifice. '*Repent!*' Of what? Here you must answer such questions as, What is sin? What is the evil of sin? What are the consequences of sin? 'Be converted!' But what is it to be converted? By what power can we be converted? What from? What to?

The field of instruction is wide if men are to be made to know the truth which saves. 'That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good,' and it is ours as the Lord's instruments to make men so to know the truth that they may believe it, and feel its power. We are not to try and save men in the dark, but in the power of the Holy Ghost we are to seek to turn them from darkness to light.

And, do not believe, dear friends, that when you go into revival meetings, or special evangelistic services, you are to leave out the doctrines of the gospel; for you ought then to proclaim the doctrines of grace rather more than less. Teach gospel doctrines clearly, affectionately, simply, and plainly, and especially those truths which have a present and practical bearing upon man's condition and God's grace. Some enthusiasts would seem to have imbibed the notion that, as soon as a minister addresses the unconverted, he should deliberately contradict his usual doctrinal discourses, because it is supposed that there will be no conversions if he preaches the whole counsel of God. It just comes to this, brethren, it is supposed that we are to conceal truth, and utter a half-falsehood, in order to save souls. We are to speak the truth to God's people because they will not

hear anything else; but we are to wheedle sinners into faith by exaggerating one part of truth, and hiding the rest until a more convenient season. This is a strange theory, and yet many endorse it. According to them, we may preach the redemption of a chosen number to God's people, but universal redemption must be our doctrine when we speak with the outside world; we are to tell believers that salvation is all of grace, but sinners are to be spoken with as if they were to save themselves; we are to inform Christians that God the Holy Spirit alone can convert, but when we talk with the unsaved, the Holy Ghost is scarcely to be named.

We have not so learned Christ. Thus others have done; let them be our beacons, and not our examples. He who sent us to win souls neither permits us to invent false-hoods, nor to suppress truth. His work can be done without such suspicious methods.

Perhaps some of you will reply, 'But, still, God has blessed half-statements and wild assertions.' Be not quite so sure. I venture to assert that God does not bless falsehood; He may bless the truth which is mixed up with error; but much more of blessing would have come if the preaching had been more in accordance with His own Word. I cannot admit that the Lord blesses evangelistic Jesuitism, and the suppression of truth is not too harshly named when I so describe it. The withholding of the doctrine of the total depravity of man has wrought serious mischief to many who have listened to a certain kind of preaching. These people do not get a true healing because they do not know the disease under which they are suffering; they are never truly clothed because nothing is done towards stripping them.

In many ministries, there is not enough of probing the heart and arousing the conscience by the revelation of man's alienation from God, and by the declaration of the selfishness and the wickedness of such a state. Men need to be told that, except divine grace shall bring them out of their enmity to

God, they must eternally perish; and they must be reminded of the sovereignty of God, that He is not obliged to bring them out of this state, that He would be right and just if He left them in such a condition, that they have no merit to plead before Him, and no claims upon Him, but that if they are to be saved, it must be by grace, and by grace alone. The preacher's work is to throw sinners down in utter helplessness, that they may be compelled to look up to Him who alone can help them.

To try to win a soul for Christ by keeping that soul in ignorance of any truth, is contrary to the mind of the Spirit; and to endeavour to save men by mere claptrap, or excitement, or oratorical display, is as foolish as to hope to hold an angel with bird-lime, or lure a star with music. The best attraction is the gospel in its purity. The weapon with which the Lord conquers men is the truth as it is in Jesus. The gospel will be found equal to every emergency; an arrow which can pierce the hardest heart, a balm which will heal the deadliest wound. Preach it, and preach nothing else. Rely implicitly upon the old, old gospel. You need no other nets when you fish for men; those your Master has given you are strong enough for the great fishes, and have meshes fine enough to hold the little ones. Spread these nets and no others, and you need not fear the fulfilment of His Word, 'I will make you fishers of men.'

Secondly, to win a soul, it is necessary, not only to instruct our hearer, and make him know the truth, but *to impress him so that he may feel it.*

A purely didactic ministry, which should always appeal to the understanding, and should leave the emotions untouched, would certainly be a limping ministry. 'The legs of the lame are not equal,' says Solomon; and the unequal legs of some ministries cripple them. We have seen such a one limping about with a long doctrinal leg, but a very short emotional leg. It is a horrible thing for a man to be so doctrinal that he can speak coolly of the doom of the wicked, so that, if he does not actually praise God for it, it costs him no anguish of heart

to think of the ruin of millions of our race. This is horrible! I hate to hear the terrors of the Lord proclaimed by men whose hard visages, harsh tones, and unfeeling spirit betray a sort of doctrinal desiccation: all the milk of human kindness is dried out of them. Having no feeling himself, such a preacher creates none, and the people sit and listen while he keeps to dry, lifeless statements, until they come to value him for being 'sound', and they themselves come to be sound, too; and I need not add, sound asleep also, or what life they have is spent in sniffing out heresy, and making earnest men offenders for a word. Into this spirit may we never be baptized!

Whatever I believe, or do not believe, the command to love my neighbour as myself still retains its claim upon me, and God forbid that any views or opinions should so contract my soul, and harden my heart as to make me forget this law of love! The love of God is first, but this by no means lessens the obligation of love to man; in fact, the first command includes the second. We are to seek our neighbour's conversion because we love him, and we are to speak to him in loving terms God's loving gospel, because our heart desires his eternal good.

A sinner has a heart as well as a head; a sinner has emotions as well as thoughts; and we must appeal to both. A sinner will never be converted until his emotions are stirred. Unless he feels sorrow for sin, and unless he has some measure of joy in the reception of the Word, you cannot have much hope of him. The Word must be like a strong wind sweeping through the whole heart, and swaying the whole man, even as a field of ripening corn waves in the summer breeze. Religion without emotion is religion without life.

But, still, we must mind how these emotions are caused. Do not play upon the mind by exciting feelings which are not spiritual. Some preachers are very fond of introducing funerals and dying children into their discourses, and they make the people weep through sheer natural affection. This may lead up to something better, but in itself what is its value? What is the

good of opening up a mother's griefs or a widow's sorrows? I do not believe that our merciful Lord has sent us to make men weep over their departed relatives by digging anew their graves, and rehearsing past scenes of bereavement and woe. Why should He? It is granted that you may profitably employ the death-bed of a departed Christian, or of a dying sinner, for proof of the rest of faith in the one case, and the terror of conscience in the other; but it is out of the fact proved, and not out of the illustration itself, that the good must arise.

Natural grief is of no service in itself; indeed, we look upon it as a distraction from higher thoughts, and as a price too great to exact from tender hearts, unless we can repay them by engrafting lasting spiritual impressions upon the stock of natural affection. 'It was a very splendid oration, full of pathos,' says one who heard it. Yes, but what is the practical outcome of this pathos?

A young preacher once remarked, 'Were you not greatly struck to see so large a congregation weeping?' 'Yes,' said his judicious friend, 'but I was more struck with the reflection that they would probably have wept more at a play.' Exactly so; and the weeping in both cases may be equally valueless. I saw a girl on board a steamboat reading a book, and crying as if her heart would break; but when I glanced at the volume, I saw that it was only one of those silly yellow-covered novels which load our railway bookstalls. Her tears were a sheer waste of moisture, and so are those which are produced by mere pulpit tale-telling and death-bed painting.

If our hearers will weep over their sins, and after Jesus, let their tears flow in rivers; but if the object of their sorrow is merely natural, and not at all spiritual, what good is done by setting them weeping? There might be some virtue in making people joyful, for there is sorrow enough in the world, and the more we can promote cheerfulness, the better; but what is the use of creating needless misery? What right have you to go through the world pricking everybody with your lancet

just to show your skill in surgery? A true physician only makes incisions in order to effect cures, and a wise minister only excites painful emotions in men's minds with the distinct object of blessing their souls.

You and I must continue to drive at men's hearts till they are broken; and then we must keep on preaching Christ crucified till their hearts are bound up; and when this is accomplished, we must continue to proclaim the gospel till their whole nature is brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ. Even in these preliminaries you will be made to feel the need of the Holy Ghost to work with you, and by you; but this need will be still more evident when we advance a step further, and speak of the new birth itself in which the Holy Spirit works in a style and manner most divine.

I have already insisted upon instruction and impression as most needful to soul-winning; but these are not all, they are, indeed, only means to the desired end. A far greater work must be done before a man is saved. A wonder of divine grace must be wrought upon the soul, far transcending anything which can be accomplished by the power of man. Of all whom we would fain win for Jesus it is true, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' *The Holy Ghost must work regeneration in the objects of our love*, or they never can become possessors of eternal happiness. They must be quickened into a new life, and they must become new creatures in Christ Jesus. The same energy which accomplishes resurrection and creation must put forth all its power upon them nothing short of this can meet the case. They must be born again from above.

This might seem at first sight to put human instrumentality altogether out of the field; but on turning to the Scriptures we find nothing to justify such an inference, and much of quite an opposite tendency. There we certainly find the Lord to be all in all, but we find no hint that the use of means must therefore be dispensed with. The Lord's supreme majesty and power are seen all the more gloriously because He works by means.

He is so great that He is not afraid to put honour upon the instruments He employs, by speaking of them in high terms, and imputing to them great influence. It is sadly possible to say too little of the Holy Spirit; indeed, I fear this is one of the crying sins of the age; but yet that infallible Word, which always rightly balances truth, while it magnifies the Holy Ghost, does not speak lightly of the men by whom He works. God does not think His own honour to be so questionable that it can only be maintained by decrying the human agent.

There are two passages in the Epistles which, when put together, have often amazed me. Paul compares himself both to a father and to a mother in the matter of the new birth: he says of one convert, 'Whom I have begotten in my bonds,' and of a whole church he says, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.' This is going very far; indeed, much further than modern orthodoxy would permit the most useful minister to venture, and yet it is language sanctioned, yea, dictated, by the Spirit of God Himself; and therefore it is not to be criticised. Such mysterious power doth God infuse into the instrumentality which He ordains that we are called 'labourers together with God'; and this is at once the source of our responsibility and the ground of our hope.

Regeneration, or the new birth, works a change in the whole nature of man, and, so far as we can judge, its essence lies in the implantation and creation of a new principle within the man. The Holy Ghost creates in us a new, heavenly, and immortal nature, which is known in Scripture as 'the spirit', by way of distinction from the soul. Our theory of regeneration is that man in his fallen nature consists only of body and soul, and that when he is regenerated there is created in him a new and higher nature—'the spirit'—which is a spark from the everlasting fire of God's life and love; this falls into the heart, and abides there, and makes its receiver a partaker of the divine nature.' Thenceforward, the man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit, and the spirit is the reigning power of the three.

You will all remember that memorable chapter upon the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15, where the distinction is well brought out in the original, and may even be perceived in our version. The passage rendered, 'It is sown a natural body,' etc., might be read, 'It is sown a soulish body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a soulish body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living *soul*; the last Adam was made a quickening *spirit*. Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is soulish; and afterward that which is spiritual.' We are first in the natural or soulish stage of being, like the first Adam, and then in regeneration we enter into a new condition, and we become possessors of the life-giving 'spirit.' Without this spirit, no man can see or enter the kingdom of heaven.

It must therefore be our intense desire that the Holy Spirit should visit our hearers, and create them anew, that He would come down upon these dry bones, and breathe eternal life into the dead in sin. Till this is done, they can never receive the truth, 'for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' A new and heavenly mind must be created by omnipotence, or the man must abide in death.

You see, then, that we have before us a mighty work, for which we are of ourselves totally incapable. No minister living can save a soul; nor can all of us together, nor all the saints on earth or in heaven, work regeneration in a single person. The whole business on our part is the height of absurdity unless we regard ourselves as used by the Holy Ghost, and filled with His power. On the other hand, the marvels of regeneration which attend our ministry are the best seals and witnesses of our commission. Whereas the apostles could appeal to the miracles of Christ, and to those which they wrought in His name, we appeal to the miracles of the Holy Ghost, which

are as divine and as real as those of our Lord Himself. These miracles are the creation of a new life in the human bosom, and the total change of the whole being of those upon whom the Spirit descends.

As this God-begotten spiritual life in men is a mystery, we shall speak to more practical effect if we dwell upon the signs following and accompanying it, for these are the things at which we must aim.

First, regeneration will be shown in *conviction of sin*.

This we believe to be an indispensable mark of the Spirit's work; the new life as it enters the heart causes intense inward pain as one of its first effects. Though nowadays we hear of persons being healed before they have been wounded, and brought into a certainty of justification without ever having lamented their condemnation, we are very dubious as to the value of such healings and justifying. This style of things is not according to the truth. God never clothes men until He has first stripped them, nor does He quicken them by the gospel till first they are slain by the law. When you meet with persons in whom there is no trace of conviction of sin, you may be quite sure that they have not been wrought upon by the Holy Spirit; for 'when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.'

When the Spirit of the Lord breathes on us, He withers all the glory of man, which is but as the flower of grass, and then He reveals a higher and abiding glory. Do not be astonished if you find this conviction of sin to be very acute and alarming; but, on the other hand, do not condemn those in whom it is less intense, for so long as sin is mourned over, confessed, forsaken, and abhorred, you have an evident fruit of the Spirit. Much of the horror and unbelief which goes with conviction is not of the Spirit of God, but comes of Satan or corrupt nature; yet there must be true and deep conviction of sin, and this the preacher must labour to produce, for where this is not felt the new birth has not taken place.

Equally certain is it that true conversion may be known by the exhibition of *a simple faith in Jesus Christ*.

You need not that I speak unto you of that, for you yourselves are fully persuaded of it. The production of faith is the very centre of the target at which you aim. The proof to you that you have won the man's soul for Jesus is never before you till he has done with himself and his own merits, and has closed in with Christ.

Great care must be taken that this faith is exercised upon Christ for a complete salvation, and not for a part of it. Numbers of persons think that the Lord Jesus is available for the pardon of past sin, but they cannot trust Him for their preservation in the future. They trust for years past, but not for years to come; whereas no such sub-division of salvation is ever spoken of in Scripture as the work of Christ. Either He bore all our sins, or none; and He either saves us once for all, or not at all. His death can never be repeated, and it must have made expiation for the future sin of believers, or they are lost, since no further atonement can be supposed, and future sin is certain to be committed.

Blessed be His name, 'by Him all that believe are justified from all things.' Salvation by grace is eternal salvation. Sinners must commit their souls to the keeping of Christ to all eternity; how else are they saved men? Alas! according to the teaching of some, believers are only saved in part, and for the rest must depend upon their future endeavours. Is this the gospel? I trow not. Genuine faith trusts a whole Christ for the whole of salvation.

Is it any wonder that many converts fall away, when, in fact, they were never taught to exercise faith in Jesus for eternal salvation, but only for temporary conversion? A faulty exhibition of Christ begets a faulty faith; and when this pines away in its own imbecility, who is to blame for it? According to their faith so is it unto them: the preacher and possessor of a partial faith must unitedly bear the blame of the failure when their poor mutilated trust comes to a break-down.

I would the more earnestly insist upon this because a semi-legal way of believing is so common. We must urge the trembling sinner to trust wholly and alone upon the Lord Jesus for ever, or we shall have him inferring that he is to begin in the Spirit and be made perfect by the flesh: he will surely walk by faith as to the past, and then by works as to the future, and this will be fatal. True faith in Jesus receives *eternal* life, and sees perfect salvation in Him, whose one sacrifice hath sanctified the people of God once for all.

The sense of being saved, completely saved in Christ Jesus, is not, as some suppose, the source of carnal security and the enemy of holy zeal, but the very reverse. Delivered from the fear which makes the salvation *of* self a more immediate object than salvation *from* self; and inspired by holy gratitude to his Redeemer, the regenerated man becomes capable of virtue, and is filled with an enthusiasm for God's glory. While trembling under a sense of insecurity, a man gives his chief thought to his own interests; but planted firmly on the Rock of ages, he has time and heart to utter the new song which the Lord has put into his mouth, and then is his moral salvation complete, for self is no longer the lord of his being.

Rest not content till you see clear evidence in your converts of a simple, sincere, and decided faith in the Lord Jesus.

Together with undivided faith in Jesus Christ there must also be *unfeigned repentance of sin*.

Repentance is an old-fashioned word, not much used by modern revivalists. 'Oh!' said a minister to me, one day, 'it only means a change of mind.' This was thought to be a profound observation. 'Only a change of mind'; but what a change! A change of mind with regard to everything! Instead of saying, 'It is only a change of mind,' it seems to me more truthful to say it is a great and deep change—even a change of the mind itself. But whatever the literal Greek word may mean, repentance is no trifle. You will not find a better definition of it than the one given in the children's hymn:—

'Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more.'

True conversion is attended in all men by a sense of sin, which we have spoken of under the head of conviction; by a sorrow for sin, or holy grief at having committed it; by a hatred of sin, which proves that its dominion is ended; and by a practical turning from sin, which shows that the life within the soul is operating upon the life without.

True belief and true repentance are twins: it would be idle to attempt to say which is born first. All the spokes of a wheel move at once when the wheel moves, and so all the graces commence action when regeneration is wrought by the Holy Ghost. Repentance, however, there must be. No sinner looks to the Saviour with a dry eye or a hard heart. Aim, therefore, at heart-breaking, at bringing home condemnation to the conscience, and weaning the mind from sin, and be not content till the whole mind is deeply and vitally changed in reference to sin.

Another proof of the conquest of a soul for Christ will be found in a *real change of life*.

If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of, and his conversion is a fiction. Not only action and language, but spirit and temper must be changed. 'But,' says someone, 'grace is often grafted on a crab-stock.' I know it is; but what is the fruit of the grafting? The fruit will be like the graft, and not after the nature of the original stem. 'But,' says another, 'I have an awful temper, and all of a sudden it overcomes me. My anger is soon over, and I feel very penitent. Though I cannot control myself I am quite sure I am a Christian.' Not so fast, my friend, or I may answer that I am quite as sure the other way. What is the use of your soon cooling if in two or three moments you scald all around you? If a man stabs me in a fury, it will not heal my wound to see him grieving over his madness. Hasty temper

must be conquered, and the whole man must be renewed, or conversion will be questionable.

We are not to hold up a modified holiness before our people, and say, You will be all right if you reach that standard. The Scripture says, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' Abiding under the power of any known sin is a mark of our being the servants of sin, for 'his servants ye are to whom ye obey.' Idle are the boasts of a man who harbours within himself the love of any transgression. He may feel what he likes, and believe what he likes, he is still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity while a single sin rules his heart and life. True regeneration implants a hatred of all evil; and where one sin is delighted in, the evidence is fatal to a sound hope. A man need not take a dozen poisons to destroy his life, one is quite sufficient.

There must be a harmony between the life and the profession. A Christian professes to renounce sin and if he does not do so, his very name is an imposture. A drunken man came up to Rowland Hill, one day, and said, 'I am one of your converts, Mr Hill.' 'I daresay you are,' replied that shrewd and sensible preacher, 'but you are none of the Lord's, or you would not be drunk.' To this practical test we must bring all our work.

In our converts we must also see *true prayer*, which is the vital breath of godliness.

If there is no prayer, you may be quite sure the soul is dead. We are not to urge men to pray as though it were the great gospel duty, and the one prescribed way of salvation; for our chief message is, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is easy to put prayer into its wrong place, and make it out to be a kind of work by which men are to live; but this you will, I trust, most carefully avoid. Faith is the great gospel grace; but still we cannot forget that true faith always prays, and when a man professes faith in the Lord Jesus, and yet does not cry to the Lord daily, we dare not believe in his faith or his conversion. The Holy Ghost's evidence by which He

convinced Ananias of Paul's conversion was not, 'Behold, he talks loudly of his joys and feelings,' but, 'Behold, he prayeth,' and that prayer was earnest, heart-broken confession and supplication. Oh, to see this sure evidence in all who profess to be our converts!

There must also be a *willingness to obey the Lord in all His commandments*.

It is a shameful thing for a man to profess discipleship and yet refuse to learn his Lord's will upon certain points, or even dare to decline obedience when that will is known. How can a man be a disciple of Christ when he openly lives in disobedience to Him?

If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows his Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Has not the Lord said, 'He that taketh not up his cross, and cometh after Me, cannot be My disciple'? Mistakes as to what the Lord's will may be are to be tenderly corrected, but anything like wilful disobedience is fatal; to tolerate it would be treason to Him that sent us. Jesus must be received as King as well as Priest; and where there is any hesitancy about this, the foundation of godliness is not yet laid.

'Faith must obey her Maker's will
As well as trust His grace
A pardoning God is jealous still
For His own holiness.'

Thus, you see, my brethren, the signs which prove that a soul is won are by no means trifling, and the work to be done ere those signs can exist is not to be lightly spoken of. A soul-winner can do nothing without God. He must cast himself on the Invisible, or be a laughing-stock to the devil, who regards with utter disdain all who think to subdue human nature with mere words and arguments.

To all who hope to succeed in such a labour by their own strength, we would address the words of the Lord to Job, 'Canst

thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?' Dependence upon God is our strength, and our joy: in that dependence let us go forth, and seek to win souls for Him.

Now, in the course of our ministry, we shall meet with many failures in this matter of soul-winning. There are many birds that I have thought I had caught; I have even managed to put salt on their tails, but they have gone flying off after all.

I remember one man, whom I will call *Tom Careless*. He was the terror of the village in which he lived. There were many incendiary fires in the region, and most people attributed them to him. Sometimes, he would be drunk for two or three weeks at a spell, and then he raved and raged like a madman. That man came to hear me; I recollect the sensation that went through the little chapel when he came in. He sat there, and fell in love with me; I think that was the only conversion that he experienced, but he professed to be converted. He had, apparently, been the subject of genuine repentance, and he became outwardly quite a changed character, gave up his drinking and swearing, and was in many respects an exemplary individual.

I remember seeing him tugging a barge, with perhaps a hundred people on board, whom he was drawing up to a place where I was going to preach; and he was glorying in the work, and singing as gladly and happily as any one of them. If anybody spoke a word against the Lord or His servant, he did not hesitate a moment, but knocked him over. Before I left the district, I was afraid that there was no real work of grace in him; he was a wild Red Indian sort of a man. I have heard of him taking a bird, plucking it, and eating it raw in the field. This is not the act of a Christian man, it is not one of the things that

are comely, and of good repute. After I left the neighbourhood, I asked after him, and I could hear nothing good of him; the spirit that kept him outwardly right was gone, and he became worse than he was before, if that was possible; certainly, he was no better, he was unreachable by any agency.

That work of mine did not stand the fire; it would not bear even ordinary temptation, you see, after the person who had influence over the man was gone away. When you move from the village or town where you have been preaching, it is very likely that some, who did run well, will go back. They have an affection for you, and your words have a kind of mesmeric influence over them; and when you are gone, the dog will return to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Do not be in a hurry to count these supposed converts; do not take them into the church too soon; do not be too proud of their enthusiasm if it is not accompanied with some degree of softening, and tenderness, to show that the Holy Spirit has really been at work within them.

I remember another case of quite a different sort. I will call this person *Miss Mary Shallow*, for she was a young lady, who was never blessed with many brains; but living in the same house with several Christian young ladies she also professed to be converted. When I conversed with her, there was apparently everything that one could wish for. I thought of proposing her to the church; but it was judged best to give her a little trial first. After a while, she left the associations of the place where she had lived, and went where she had nothing much to help her; and I never heard anything more of her except that her whole time was spent in dressing herself as smartly as she could, and in frequenting gay society. She is a type of those who have not much mental furniture; and if the grace of God does not take possession of the empty space, they very soon go back into the world.

I have known several like a young man whom I will call *Charlie Clever*, uncommonly clever fellows at anything and

everything, very clever at counterfeiting religion when they took up with it. They prayed very fluently; they tried to preach, and did it very well; whatever they did, they did it off-hand, it was as easy to them as kissing their hand. Do not be in a hurry to take such people into the church; they have known no humiliation on account of sin, no brokenness of heart, no sense of divine grace. They cry, 'All serene!' and away they go; but you will find that they will never repay you for your labour and trouble. They will be able to use the language of God's people as well as the best of His saints, they will even talk of their doubts and fears, and they will get up a deep experience in five minutes. They are a little too clever, and they are calculated to do much mischief when they get into the church; so keep them out if you possibly can.

I remember one who was very saintly in his talk, I will call him *John Fairspeech*. Oh! how cunningly he could act the hypocrite, getting among our young men, and leading them into all manner of sin and iniquity, and yet he would call and see me, and have half-an-hour's spiritual conversation! An abominable wretch, who was living in open sin at the very time that he was seeking to come to the Lord's table, and joining our societies, and anxious to be a leading man in every good work. Keep your weather eye open, brethren! They will come to you with money in their hands, like Peter's fish with the silver in its mouth; and they will be so helpful in the work! They speak so softly, and they are such perfect gentlemen! Yes, I believe Judas was a man exactly of that kind, very clever at deceiving those around him. We must mind that we do not get any of these into the church if we can anyhow keep them out.

You may say to yourself, at the close of a service, 'Here is a splendid haul of fish!' Wait a bit. Remember our Saviour's words, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.' Do not number your fishes

before they are broiled; nor count your converts before you have tested and tried them. This process may make your work somewhat slow; but then, brethren, it will be sure.

Do your work steadily and well, so that those who come after you may not have to say that it was far more trouble to them to clear the church of those who ought never to have been admitted than it was to you to admit them. If God enables you to build three thousand bricks into His spiritual temple in one day, you may do it; but Peter has been the only bricklayer who has accomplished that feat up to the present.

Do not go and paint the wooden wall as if it were solid stone; but let all your building be real, substantial, and true, for only this kind of work is worth the doing. Let all your building for God be like that of the apostle Paul;

‘According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire’ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).