

SOUL-WINNING
NO. 850

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He that wins souls is wise.”
Proverbs 11:30.

THE text does not say, “He that wins money is wise,” though no doubt *he* thinks himself wise and perhaps, in a certain groveling sense in these days of competition, he must be so, but such wisdom is of the earth, and ends with the earth. And there is another world where the currencies of Europe will not be accepted, nor their past possession be any sign of wealth or wisdom. Solomon, in the text before us, awards no crown for wisdom to crafty statesmen, or even to the ablest of rulers. He issues no diplomas to philosophers, poets, or men of wit. He crowns with laurel only those who win souls.

He does not declare that he who preaches is necessarily wise—and alas! there are multitudes who preach and gain much applause and eminence, who win no souls, and who shall find it go hard with them at the last, because in all probability they have run, and the Master has never sent them. He does not say that he who talks about winning souls is wise, since to lay down rules for others is a very simple thing, but to carry them out one’s self is far more difficult. He who actually, really, and truly turns men from the error of their ways to God, and so is made the means of saving them from going down to hell, is a wise man. And that is true of him whatever his style of soul-winning may be.

He may be a Paul, deeply logical, profound in doctrine, able to command all candid judgments—and if he thus win souls, he is wise. He may be an Apollos, grandly rhetorical, whose lofty genius soars into the very heaven of eloquence—and if he wins souls in that way he is wise, but not otherwise. Or he may be a Cephas, rough and rugged, using uncouth metaphor and stern declamation, but if he wins souls he is no less wise than his polished brother or his argumentative friend. The great wisdom of soul-winners, according to the text, is proven only by their actual success in really winning souls. To their own Master they are accountable for the ways in which they go to work, not to us.

Do not let us be comparing and contrasting this minister and that. Who are you that judges another man’s servants? Wisdom is justified in all her children. Only children wrangle about incidental methods—men look at sublime results. Do these workers of many sorts and divers manners win souls? Then they are wise. And you who criticize them, being yourselves unfruitful, cannot be wise, even though you affect to be their judges. God proclaims soul-winners to be wise, dispute it who dare. This degree from the College of Heaven may surely stand them in good stead—let their fellow mortals say what they will of them, “He that wins souls is wise,” and this can be seen very clearly.

He must be a wise man in even ordinary respects who can, by divine grace, achieve so divine a marvel. Great soul-winners have never been fools. A man whom God qualifies to win souls could probably do anything else which providence might allot him. Take Martin Luther! Why, sirs, the man was not only fit to work a Reformation, but he could have ruled a nation or have commanded an army.

Think of Whitefield, and remember that the thundering eloquence which stirred all England was not associated with a weak judgment, or an absence of brain power—the man was a master orator, and if he had addicted himself to commerce, would have taken a chief place among the merchants. Or had he been a politician, amid admiring senates he would have commanded the listening ear. He that wins souls is usually a man who could have done anything else if God had called him to it.

I know the Lord uses what means He wills, but He always uses means suitable to the end. And if you tell me that David slew Goliath with a sling, I answer—it was the best weapon in the world to reach so tall a giant, and the very fittest weapon that David could have used, for he had been skilled in it from his youth up. There is always an adaptation in the instruments which God uses to produce the ordained

result, and though the glory is not to them, nor the excellence in them, but all is to be ascribed to God, yet is there a fitness and preparedness which God sees, even if we do not. It is assuredly true that soul-winners are by no means idiots or simpletons, but such as God makes wise for Himself, though vainglorious wiseacres may dub them fools.

“He that wins souls is wise,” because he has selected a wise object. I think it was Michelangelo who once carved certain magnificent statues in snow. They are gone, the material readily compacted by the frost as readily melted in the heat. Far wiser was he when he fashioned the enduring marble, and produced works which will last all down the ages. But even marble itself is consumed and fretted by the tooth of time. And so he is wise who selects for his raw material immortal souls, whose existence shall outlast the stars.

If God shall bless us to the winning of souls, our work shall remain when the wood, and hay, and stubble of earth’s art and science shall have gone to the dust from which they sprang. In heaven itself, the soul-winner blessed of God shall have memorials of his work preserved forever in the galleries of the skies. He has selected a wise object, for what can be wiser than to glorify God and what, next to that, can be wiser than in the highest sense to bless our fellow men—to snatch a soul from the gulf that yawns, to lift it up to the heaven that glorifies, to deliver an immortal from the thralldom of Satan, and to bring him into the liberty of Christ? What more excellent than this? I say that such an aim would commend itself to all right minds and that angels themselves may envy us poor sons of men that we are permitted to make this our life-work, to win souls for Jesus Christ.

Wisdom herself assents to the excellence of the design. To accomplish such a work, a man must be wise, for to win a soul requires infinite wisdom. God Himself wins not souls without wisdom, for the eternal plan of salvation was dictated by an infallible judgment, and in every line of it infinite skill is apparent. Christ, God’s great soul-winner, is “the wisdom of God,” as well as “the power of God.” There is as much wisdom to be seen in the new creation as in the old. In a sinner saved, there is as much of God to be beheld as in a universe rising out of nothing.

And we then, who are to be workers together with God, proceeding side by side with Him to the great work of soul-winning, must also be wise. It is a work which filled a Savior’s heart—a work which moved the eternal mind before the earth was. It is no child’s play, nor a thing to be achieved while we are half asleep, nor to be attempted without deep consideration, nor to be carried on without gracious help from the only-wise God, our Savior. The pursuit is wise.

Mark you well, my brethren, that he who is successful in soul-winning will prove to have been a wise man in the judgment of those who see the end as well as the beginning. Even if I were utterly selfish and had no care for anything but my own happiness, I would choose, if I might, under God, to be a soul-winner, for never did I know perfect, overflowing, unutterable happiness of the purest and most ennobling order till I first heard of one who had sought and found a Savior through my means.

I recollect the thrill of joy which went through me! No young mother ever rejoiced so much over her first-born child—no warrior was so exultant over a hard-won victory. Oh, the joy of knowing that a sinner once at enmity has been reconciled to God, by the Holy Spirit, through the words spoken by our feeble lips. Since then, by grace given to me, the thought of which prostrates me in self-abasement, I have seen and heard of not hundreds only, but even thousands of sinners turned from the error of their ways by the testimony of God in me. Let afflictions come, let trials be multiplied as God wills, still this joy exceeds above all others—the joy that we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in every place, and that as often as we preach the Word, hearts are unlocked, bosoms heave with a new life, eyes weep for sin, and their tears are wiped away as they see the great Substitute for sin and live.

Beyond all controversy, it is a joy worth worlds to win souls and thank God, it is a joy that does not cease with this mortal life. It must be no small bliss to hear, as one wings his flight up to the eternal throne, the wings of others fluttering at one’s side towards the same glory, and turning round and questioning them, to hear them say, “We are entering with you through the gates of pearl—you brought us to the Savior.” To be welcomed to the skies by those who call us father, in God—father in better

bonds than those of earth—father through grace, and sire for immortality—it will be bliss beyond compare, to meet in yon eternal seats with those begotten of us in Christ Jesus, for whom we travailed in birth, till Christ was formed in them the hope of glory. This is to have many heavens—a heaven in everyone won for Christ, according to the Master’s promise, “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.”

I have said enough, brethren, I trust, to make some of you desire to occupy the position of soul-winners. But before I further address myself to my text, I should like to remind you that the honor does not belong to ministers only. They may take their full share of it, but it belongs to every one of you who have devoted yourselves to Christ. Such honor have all the saints. Every man here, every woman here, every child here whose heart is right with God, may be a soul-winner. There is no man placed by God’s providence where he cannot do some good. There is not a glowworm under a hedge but gives a needed light, and there is not a laboring man, a suffering woman, a servant girl, a chimney-sweeper, or a crossing-sweeper, but what has opportunities for serving God.

And what I have said of soul-winners belongs not to the learned doctor of divinity, or to the eloquent preacher alone, but to you all who are in Christ Jesus. You can, each of you, if grace enable you, be wise and win the happiness of turning souls to Christ through the Holy Spirit.

I am about to dwell upon my text in this way—“He that wins souls is wise.” I shall, first, *make that fact stand out a little clearer by explaining the metaphor used in the text—winning souls*. And then, secondly, by giving you *some lessons in the matter of soul-winning, through which, I trust, the conviction will be forced upon each believing mind that the work needs the highest wisdom*.

I. First, LET US CONSIDER THE METAPHOR USED IN THE TEXT—“He that wins souls is wise.”

We use the word “win” in many ways. It is sometimes found in very bad company, in those games of chance, juggling tricks, and sleight-of-hand, or thimble-rigging (to use a plain word), by which cheaters are so fond of winning by. I am sorry to say that much of magic and trickery are to be met with in the religious world. Why, there are those who pretend to save souls by curious tricks, intricate maneuvers, and dexterous posture making. A basin of water, half-a-dozen drops, certain syllables—heigh, presto!—the infant is a child of grace, and becomes a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

This aqueous regeneration surpasses my belief. It is a trick which I do not understand. The initiated only can perform this beautiful piece of magic, which excels anything ever attempted by the Wizard of the North. There is a way, too, of winning souls by laying hands upon heads, only the elbows of aforesaid hands must be encased in flowing robes, and then the machinery acts, and there is grace conferred by blessed fingers! I must confess I do not understand the occult science, but at this I need not wonder, for the profession of saving souls by such juggling can only be carried out by certain favored persons who have received apostolic succession direct from Judas Iscariot.

This Episcopal confirmation, when men pretend that it confers grace, is an infamous piece of juggling. The whole thing is an abomination. Only to think that in this nineteenth century there should be men who preach up salvation by sacraments, and salvation by themselves, indeed. Why, sirs, it is surely too late in the day to come to us with this drivel! Priestcraft, let us hope, is an anachronism, and the sacramental theory out of date. These things might have done for those who could not read, and for the days when books were scarce, but ever since the day when the glorious Luther was helped by God to proclaim with thunderclaps the emancipating truth, “By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,” there has been too much of light for these Popish owls. Let them go back to their ivy-mantled towers, and complain to the moon of those who spoiled of old their kingdom of darkness. Let shaven crowns go to Bedlam, and scarlet hats to the scarlet harlot, but let not Englishmen yield them respect.

Modern Tractarianism is a bastard Popery—too mean, too shifty, too double-dealing to delude men of honest minds. If we win souls it shall be by other arts than Jesuits and shavelings can teach us. Trust

not in any man who pretends to priesthood. Priests are liars by trade, and deceivers by profession. We cannot save souls in their theatrical way, and do not want to do so, for we know that with such jugglery as that, Satan will hold the best hand, and laugh at priests as he turns the cards against them at the last.

How do we win souls, then? Why, the word “win” has a far better meaning. It is used *in warfare*. Warriors win cities and provinces. Now, to win a soul is a much more difficult thing than to win a city. Observe the earnest soul-winner at his work, how cautiously he seeks his great Captain’s directions to know when to hang out the white flag to invite the heart to surrender to the sweet love of a dying Savior. When, at the proper time, to hang out the black flag of threatening, showing that if grace be not received, judgment will surely follow. And when to unfurl, with dread reluctance, the red flag of the terrors of God against stubborn, impenitent souls.

The soul-winner has to sit down before a soul as a great captain before a walled town. He has to draw his lines of circumvallation, to cast up his entrenchments, and fix his batteries. He must not advance too fast—he may overdo the fighting. He must not move too slowly, for he may seem not to be in earnest, and may do mischief. Then he must know which gate to attack—how to plant his guns at Ear-Gate, and how to discharge them; how, sometimes, to keep the batteries going, day and night, with red-hot shot, if perhaps he may make a breach in the walls.

At other times, to lay by and cease, and then, on a sudden, to open all the batteries with terrific violence, if perhaps he may take the soul by surprise or cast in a truth when it was not expected, to burst like a shell in the soul, and do damage to the dominions of sin. The Christian soldier must know how to advance by little and little—to sap that prejudice, to undermine that old enmity, to blow into the air that lust, and at the last to storm the citadel. It is his to throw the scaling ladder up, and to have his ears gladdened as he hears a clicking on the wall of the heart, telling that the scaling ladder has grasped and has gained a firm hold. And then, with his saber between his teeth, he climbs up and springs on the man, and slay his unbelief in the name of God, and capture the city, and run up the blood-red flag of the cross of Christ.

Then he can say, “The heart is won, won for Christ at last.” All this needs a warrior well trained—a master in his art. After many days’ attack, many weeks of waiting, many an hour of storming by prayer, and battering by entreaty, to carry the Malakoff of depravity—this is the work—this the difficulty. It takes no fool to do this. God’s grace must make a man wise to capture Mansoul, to lead its captivity captive, and open wide the heart’s gates that the Prince Immanuel may come in. This is winning a soul.

The word, “win,” was commonly used among the ancients *to signify winning in the wrestling match*. When the Greek sought to win the laurel, or the ivy crown, he was compelled a long time before to put himself through a course of training, and when he came forth at last, stripped for the encounter, he had no sooner exercised himself in the first few efforts, than you saw how every muscle and every nerve had been developed in him. He had a stern opponent, and he knew it, and therefore left none of his energy unused. While the wrestling was going on you could see the man’s eye, how he watched every motion, every feint of his antagonist, and how his hand, his foot, and his whole body were thrown into the encounter. He feared to meet with a fall—he hoped to give one to his foe.

Now, a true soul-winner has often to come to close quarters with the devil within men. He has to struggle with their prejudice, with their love of sin, with their unbelief, with their pride. And then again, all of a sudden, to grapple with their despair. At one moment he strives with their self-righteousness, at the next moment with their unbelief in God. Ten thousand arts are used to prevent the soul-winner from being conqueror in the encounter, but if God has sent him, he will never renounce his hold of the soul he seeks till he has given a throw to the power of sin, and won another soul for Christ.

Besides that, there is another meaning to the word “win,” upon which I cannot expatiate here. We use the word, you know, in a softer sense than these which have been mentioned, *when we come to deal with hearts*. There are secret and mysterious ways by which those who love win the object of their affection, which are wise in their fitness to the purpose. I cannot tell you how the lover wins his fond

one, but experience has probably taught you. The weapon of this warfare is not always the same, yet where that victory is won, the wisdom of the means becomes clear to every eye.

The weapon of love is sometimes a look, or a soft word whispered and eagerly listened to. Sometimes it is a tear. But this I know, that we have, most of us in our turn, cast around another heart a chain which that other would not care to break, and which has linked us together in a blessed captivity which has cheered our life.

Yes, and that is very nearly the way in which we have to win souls. That illustration is nearer the mark than any of the others. Love is the true way of soul-winning, for when I spoke of storming the walls, and when I spoke of wrestling, those were but metaphors, but this is near the fact. We win by love. We win hearts for Jesus by love, by sympathy with their sorrow, by anxiety lest they should perish, by pleading with God for them with all our hearts that they should not be left to die unsaved, by pleading with them for God that, for their own sake, they would seek mercy and find grace. Yes, sirs, there is a spiritual wooing and winning of hearts for the Lord Jesus, and if you would learn the way, you must ask God to give you a tender heart, and a sympathizing soul.

I believe that much of the secret of soul-winning lies in having hearts of compassion, in having spirits that can be touched with the feeling of human infirmities. Carve a preacher out of granite, and even if you give him an angel's tongue, he will convert nobody. Put him into the most fashionable pulpit, make his elocution faultless, and his matter profoundly orthodox, but so long as he bears within his bosom a hard heart, he can never win a soul. Soul-winning requires a heart that beats hard against the ribs. It requires a soul full of the milk of human kindness. This is the *sine qua non* of success. This is the chief natural qualification for a soul-winner, which, under God and blessed of Him, will accomplish wonders.

I have not looked at the Hebrew of the text, but I find—and you will find who have margins to your Bibles—that it is, “He who *takes* souls is wise,” which word refers to fishing, or to bird catching. Every Sunday when I leave my house, I cannot help seeing as I come along, men with their little cages and their stuffed birds, trying all around the common, and in the fields to catch poor little warblers. They understand the method of alluring and entrapping their little victims. Soul-winners might learn much from them.

We must have our lures for souls adapted to attract, to fascinate, to grasp. We must go forth with our birdlime, our decoys, our nets, our baits, so that we may but catch the souls of men. Their enemy is a fowler possessed of the basest and most astounding cunning. We must outwit him with the guile of honesty, the craft of grace. But the art is to be learned only by divine teaching and herein we must be wise and willing to learn.

The man who takes fish must also have some art in him. Washington Irving, I think it is, tells us of some three gentlemen who had read in Izaak Walton all about the delights of fishing. So they must needs enter upon the same amusement, and accordingly they became disciples of the gentle art. They went into New York and bought the best rods and lines that could be purchased, and they found out the exact fly for the particular day or month, so that the fish might bite at once, and as it were fly into the basket with alacrity. They fished, and fished, and fished the live-long day, but the basket was empty.

They were getting disgusted with a sport that had no sport in it, when a ragged boy came down from the hills without shoes or stockings, and humiliated them to the last degree. He had a bit of a bough pulled from off a tree, and a piece of string, and a bent pin. He put a worm on it, threw it in, and out came a fish directly, as if it were a needle drawn to a magnet. In again went the line, and out came another fish, and so on, till his basket was quite full. They asked him how he did it. Ah! he said, he could not tell them that, but it was easy enough when you had the way of it.

Much the same is it in fishing for men. Some preachers who have silk lines and fine rods, preach very eloquently and exceedingly gracefully, but they never win souls. I know not how it is, but another man comes with very simple language, but with a warm heart, and straightway, men are converted to God. Surely there must be a sympathy between the minister and the souls he would win. God gives to

those whom He makes soul-winners a natural love to their work, and a spiritual fitness for it. There is a sympathy between those who are to be blessed, and those who are to be the means of blessing, and very much by this sympathy, under God, souls are taken. But it is as clear as noonday, that to be a fisher of men a man must be wise. "He that wins souls is wise."

II. And now, brethren and sisters, you who are engaged in the Lord's work from week to week, and who seek to win men's souls to Christ, I am, in the second place, to illustrate this BY TELLING YOU OF SOME OF THE WAYS BY WHICH SOULS ARE TO BE WON.

The preacher himself wins souls, I believe, *best, when he believes in the reality of his work—when he believes in instantaneous conversions.* How can he expect God to do what he does not believe God will do? He succeeds best who expects conversion every time he preaches. According to his faith, so shall it be done unto him.

To be content without conversions is the surest way never to have them. To drive with a single aim entirely at the saving of souls is the sure method of usefulness. If we sigh and cry till men are saved, saved they will be.

He will succeed best *who keeps closest to soul-saving truth.* Now, all truth is not soul-saving, though all truth may be edifying. He who keeps to the simple story of the cross, tells men over and over again that whosoever believes in Christ is not condemned, that to be saved, nothing is wanted but a simple trust in the crucified Redeemer; he whose ministry is much made up of the glorious story of the cross, the sufferings of the dying Lamb, the mercy of God, the willingness of the great Father to receive returning prodigals; he who cries, in fact, from day to day, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," he is likely to be a soul-winner, especially if he adds to this much prayer for souls, much anxious desire that men may be brought to Jesus, and then in his private life seeks as much as in his public ministry to be telling out to others of the love of the dear Savior of men.

But I am not talking to ministers, but to you who sit in the pew, and therefore to you let me turn myself more directly. Brothers and sisters, you have different gifts. I hope you use them all. Perhaps some of you, though members of the church, think you have none, but every believer has his gift and his portion of work. What can you do to win souls?

Let me recommend to those who think they can do nothing, *the bringing of others to hear the Word.* That is a duty much neglected. I can hardly ask you to bring anybody here, because many of you attend other places which are not perhaps half-filled. Fill them. Do not grumble at the small congregation, but make it larger. Take somebody with you to the very next sermon, and at once the congregation will be increased. Go up with the prayer that your minister's sermon may be blessed, and if you cannot preach yourselves, yet, by bringing others under the sound of the Word, you may be doing what is next best.

This is a very commonplace and simple remark, but let me press it upon you, for it is of great practical value. Many churches and chapels which are almost empty, might soon have large audiences if those who profit by the Word would tell others about the profit they have received, and induce them to attend the same ministry. Especially in this London of ours, where so many will not go up to the house of God—persuade your neighbors to come forth to the place of worship. Look after them. Make them feel that it is a wrong thing to stay at home on Sunday from morning till night. I do not say upbraid them, that does little good, but I do say entice them, persuade them.

Let them have your tickets for the Tabernacle, for instance, sometimes, or stand in the aisles yourself, and let them have your seat. Get them under the Word, and who knows what may be the result? Oh, what a blessing it would be to you if you heard that what you could not do, for you could scarcely speak for Christ, was done by your pastor, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through your inducing one to come within gunshot of the Gospel!

Next to that, soul-winners, *try after the sermon to talk to strangers.* The preacher may have missed the mark—you need not miss it. Or the preacher may have struck the mark, and you can help to make the impression deeper by a kind word. I recollect several persons joining this church who traced their conversion to the ministry in the Surrey Music Hall, but who said it was not that alone, but another

agency cooperating therewith. They were fresh from the country, and some good man, I knew him well, I think he is in heaven now, met two of them at the gate, spoke to them, said he hoped they had enjoyed what they had heard, heard their answer, asked them if they were coming in the evening. Said he would be glad if they would drop into his house to tea. They did, and he had a word with them about the Master.

The next Sunday it was the same, and at last, those whom the sermons had not much impressed, were brought to hear with other ears, till by-and-by, through the good old man's persuasive words, and the good Lord's gracious work, they were converted to God. There is a fine hunting ground here, and indeed in every large congregation for you who really want to do good. How many come into this house every morning and evening with no thought about receiving Christ. Oh! if you would all help me, you who love the Master, if you would all help me by speaking to your neighbors who sit near to you, how much might be accomplished. Never let anybody say, "I came to the Tabernacle three months, and nobody spoke to me." But do, by a sweet familiarity, which ought always to be allowable in the house of God, seek with your whole heart to impress upon your friends the truth which I can only put into the ear, but which God may help you to put into the heart.

Further, let me commend to you, dear friends, *the art of button-holing acquaintances and relatives*. If you cannot preach to a hundred, preach to one. Get a hold of the man alone, and in love, quietly and prayerfully, talk to him. "One." say you. Well, is not one enough? I know your ambition, young man—you want to preach here to these thousands. Be content and begin with the ones. Your Master was not ashamed to sit on the well and preach to one, and when He had finished His sermon, He had really done good to all the city of Samaria, for that one woman became a missionary to her friends.

Timidity often prevents our being useful in this direction, but we must not give way to it. It must not be tolerated that Christ should be unknown through our silence, and sinners unwarned through our negligence. We must school and train ourselves to deal personally with the unconverted. We must not excuse ourselves, but force ourselves to the irksome task till it becomes easy. This is one of the most honorable modes of soul-winning, and if it requires more than ordinary zeal and courage, so much the more reason for our resolving to master it.

Beloved, we must win souls. We cannot live and see men damned. We must have them brought to Jesus. Oh, then, be up and doing, and let none around you die unwarned, unwept, uncared for. A tract is a useful thing, but a living word is better. Your eye, and face, and voice will all help. Do not be so cowardly as to give a piece of paper where your own speech would be so much better. I charge you, attend to this, for Jesus' sake.

Some of you could write letters for your Lord and Master. To far-off friends a few loving lines may be most influential for good. Be like the men of Issachar, who handled the pen. Paper and ink are never better used than in soul-winning. Much has been done by this method. Could you not do it? Will you not try? Some of you, at any rate, if you could not speak or write much, *could live much*. That is a fine way of preaching, that of preaching with your feet—I mean preaching by your life, and conduct, and conversation.

That loving wife who weeps in secret over an infidel husband, but is always so kind to him. That dear child whose heart is broken with a father's blasphemy, but is so much more obedient than he used to be before conversion. That servant whom the master swears at, but whom he could trust with his purse and the gold uncounted in it. That man in trade who is sneered at as a Presbyterian, but who, nevertheless, is straight as a line, and would not be compelled to do a dirty action, no, not for all the mint. These are the men and women who preach the best sermons. These are your practical preachers. Give us your holy living, and with your holy living as the leverage, we will move the world.

Under God's blessing we will find tongues if we can, but we need greatly the lives of our people to illustrate what our tongues have to say. The Gospel is something like an illustrated paper. The preacher's words are the print, but the pictures are the living men and women who form our churches. And as when people take up such a newspaper, they very often do not read the letterpress, but they always look at the

pictures—so in a church, outsiders may not come to hear the preacher, but they always consider, observe, and criticize the lives of the members. If you would be soul-winners, then, dear brethren and sisters, see that you live the Gospel. I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth.

One thing more, *the soul-winner must be a master of the art of prayer*. You cannot bring souls to God if you go not to God yourself. You must get your battle-axe and your weapons of war from the armory of sacred communion with Christ. If you are much alone with Jesus, you will catch His Spirit. You will be fired with the flame that burned in His breast and consumed His life. You will weep with the tears that fell upon Jerusalem when He saw it perishing, and if you cannot speak as eloquently as He did, yet shall there be in what you say somewhat of the same power which in Him thrilled the hearts and awoke the consciences of men.

My dear hearers, especially you members of the church, I am always so anxious lest any of you should begin to lie upon your oars and take things easy in the matters of God's kingdom. There are some of you—I bless you, and I bless God at the remembrance of you—who are in season and out of season, in earnest for winning souls, and you are the truly wise. But I fear there are others whose hands are slack, who are satisfied to let me preach, but do not preach themselves. There are some who take these seats, and occupy these pews, and hope the cause goes well, but that is all they do. Oh, let me see you all in earnest!

A great host of four thousand members—for that is now as nearly as possible the accurate counting of our numbers—what ought we not to do if we were all alive and all in earnest! But such a host, without the spirit of enthusiasm, becomes a mere mob, an unwieldy mass, out of which mischief grows, and no good results arise. If you were all firebrands for Christ, you might set the nation on a blaze. If you were all wells of living water, how many thirsty souls might drink and be refreshed!

One thing more you can do. If some of you feel you cannot do much personally, *you can always help the College*, and there it is that we find tongues for the dumb. Our young men are called out by God to preach. We give them some little education and training, and then away they go to Australia, to Canada, to the islands of the sea, to Scotland, to Wales, and throughout England, preaching the Word. And it is often, it must be often, a consolation to some of you, to think that if you have not spoken with your own tongues as you could desire, you have at least spoken by the tongues of others, so that through you the Word of God has been sounded abroad throughout all this region.

Beloved, there is one question I will ask, and I have done, and that is, *Are your own souls won?* You cannot win others else. Are you yourselves saved? My hearers, every one of you under that gallery there, and you behind here, are you yourselves saved? What if this night you should have to answer that question to another and greater than I am? What if the bony finger of the last great orator should be uplifted instead of mine? What if his unconquerable eloquence should turn those bones to stone, and glaze those eyes, and make the blood chill in your veins? Could you hope, in your last extremity, that you were saved?

If not saved, how will you ever be? When will you be saved if not now? Will any time be better than now? The way to be saved is simply to trust in what the Son of man did when He became man and suffered the punishment for all those who trust Him. For all His people, Christ was a substitute. His people are those who trust Him. If you trust Him, He was punished for your sins, and you cannot be punished for them, for God cannot punish sin twice—first in Christ, and then in you. If you trust Jesus, who now lives at the right hand of God, you are this moment pardoned, and you shall forever be saved.

O that you would trust Him now! Perhaps it may be now or never with you. May it be now, even now, and then, trusting in Jesus, dear friends, you will have no need to hesitate when the question is asked, "Are you saved?" for you can answer, "Ay, that I am, for it is written, 'He that believes in Him is not condemned.'" Trust Him, then. Trust Him now, and then God help you to be a soul-winner, and you shall be wise, and God shall be glorified.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 51.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.