

EVERYDAY USEFULNESS

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And he brought him to Jesus.”
John 1:42.*

WE have a most intense desire for the revival of religion in our own midst, and throughout all the churches of our Lord Jesus. We see that error is making great advances, and we would fain lift up a banner for the cause of truth, we pity the mighty populations among whom we dwell, for they are still godless and Christless, and the things of their peace are hid from their eyes, therefore would we fain behold the Lord performing miracles of grace. Our hope is that the set time to favor Zion is come, and we intend to be persistent in prayer that God will reveal His arm, and do great things in these latter days. Our eager desire, of which our special services will be the expression, is a right one. Challenge it who will, it is ours to cultivate it, and prove by our zeal for God that the desire is not insincere or superficial.

But, my brethren, it is very possible that in addition to cultivating a vehement desire for the revival of religion, we may have been daydreaming, and forecasting in our minds a conception of the form which the divine visitation shall take. Remembering what we have heard of former times of refreshing, you expect a repetition of the same outward signs, and look for the Lord to work as He did with Livingstone at the Kirk of Shotts, or with Jonathan Edwards in New England, or Whitefield in our own land. Perhaps you have planned in your mind that God will raise up an extraordinary preacher whose ministry will attract the multitude, and while he is preaching, God the Holy Spirit will attend the Word, so that hundreds will be converted under every sermon, other evangelists will be raised up of a like spirit, and from end to end this island shall hear the truth and feel its power.

Now it may be that God will so visit us. It may be that such signs and wonders as have frequently attended revivals may be again witnessed—the Lord may rend the heavens, and come out and make the mountains to fall down at His feet, but it is just as possible that He may select quite another method. His Holy Spirit may reveal Himself like a mighty river swollen with floods, and sweeping all before its majestic current, but if He so wills, He may rather unveil His power as the gentle dew which, without observation, refreshes all the earth. It may happen unto us as unto Elijah when the fire and the wind passed before him, but the Lord was not in either of those mighty agencies, He preferred to commune with His servant in a still, small voice.

Perhaps that still, small voice is to be language of grace in this congregation. It would be useless then for us to be mapping out the way of the eternal God, idle for us to be rejecting all the good which He may be pleased to give us because it does not happen to come in the shape which we have settled in our own minds to be the proper one. Idle, did I say? Such prejudice would be wicked to the extreme.

It has very frequently happened that while men have been sketching out imaginary designs, they have missed actual opportunities. They would not build because they could not erect a palace, they therefore shiver in the winter's cold. They would not be clothed in homespun, for they looked for scarlet and fine linen ere long, they were not content to do a little, and therefore did nothing.

I want, therefore, to say this morning, to every believer here, it is vain for us to be praying for an extensive revival of religion, and comforting each other in the hope of it, if meanwhile we suffer our zeal to effervesce, and sparkle, and then to be dissipated. Our proper plan is, with the highest expectations, and with the greatest longings, to imitate the woman of whom it is written, “She has done what she could,” by laboring diligently in such holy works as may be within our reach, according to

Solomon's precept, "Whatsoever your hands find to do, do it with all your might." While believers are zealously doing what God enables them to do, they are in the high road to abundant success, but if they stand all the day idle, gaping after wonders, their spiritual want shall come upon them as an armed man.

I have selected the text before us in order that I may speak upon matters which are practical, and efforts within the reach of all. We shall not speak of the universal triumph of the Gospel, but of its victory in single hearts, nor shall we deal with the efforts of an entire church, but with the pious fervor of individual disciples. If the Christian church were in a proper and healthy state, the members would be so studious of the Word of God, and would themselves have so much of the Spirit of Christ, that the only thing they would need in the great assemblies, over and above worship, would be a short encouraging and animating word of direction addressed to them, as to well drilled and enthusiastic soldiers, who need but the word of command, and the deed of valor is straightway performed. So would I speak and so would I have you hear at this hour.

Coming then to the subject, Andrew was converted by Christ to become His disciple. Immediately he sets to work to recruit the little army by discipling others. He finds his brother Peter, and he brings him to Jesus.

I. First, I shall call your attention, this morning, to THE MISSIONARY DISCIPLE.

Andrew is the picture of what all disciples of Christ should be. To begin then, this first successful Christian missionary *was himself a sincere follower of Jesus*. Is it needful to make that observation? Nay, will it ever be needless while so many make a profession of a faith which they do not possess? While so many will wantonly thrust themselves into the offices of Christ's church, having no concern for the glory of His kingdom, and no part or lot in it, it will be always needful to repeat that warning, "Unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?"

Men who have never seen the beauties of Emmanuel are not fit persons to describe them to others. An experiential acquaintance with vital godliness is the first necessity for a useful worker for Jesus. That preacher is accursed who knows not Christ for himself. God may, in infinite sovereignty, make him the means of blessing to others, but every moment that he tarries in the pulpit he is an impostor; every time he preaches he is a mocker of God, and woe unto him when his Master calls him to his dread account.

You unconverted young people who enter upon the work of Sabbath school instruction, and so undertake to teach others what you do not know yourselves, do place yourselves in a position of unusual solemnity and of extraordinary peril. I say "of extraordinary peril," because you do by the fact of being a teacher, profess to know, and will be judged by your profession, and I fear condemned out of your own mouths. You know the theory only of religion, and of what use is that while you are strangers to its power? How can you lead others along a way which you yourself refuse to tread? Besides, I have noticed that persons, who become active in church work before they have first believed in Christ, are very apt to remain without faith, resting content with the general reputation which they have gained.

O dear friends, beware of this. In this day hypocrisy is so common, and self-deceit is so easy, that I would not have you place yourselves where those vices become almost inevitable. If a man voluntarily puts himself where it is taken for granted that he is godly, his next step will be to mimic godliness, and by and by he will flatter himself into the belief that he really possesses that which he so successfully imitates.

Beware, dear hearers, of a religion which is not true, it is worse than none. Beware of a form of godliness which is not supported by the fervor of your heart and soul. This age of shams presents but few assistances to self-examination, hence am I the more earnest that every one of us, before he shall seek to bring others to Christ, should deliberately ask himself, "Am I a follower of Christ myself? Am I washed in His blood? Am I renewed by His Spirit? If not, my first business is not in the pulpit, but on my knees in prayer, my first occupation should not be in the Sunday school class, but in my closet, confessing my sin and seeking pardon through the atoning sacrifice."

Andrew was earnest for the souls of others, though he was but *a young convert*. So far as I can gather, he appears to have beheld Jesus as the Lamb of God one day, and to have sought after his brother

Peter, the next. Far be it from us to forbid you who but yesterday found joy and peace, to exert your new-born zeal and youthful ardor. No, my brethren and sisters, delay not, but make haste to spread abroad the good news which is now so fresh and so full of joy to you. It is right that the advanced and the experienced should be left to deal with the captious and the skeptical, but you, even you, young as you are, may find some with whom you can cope, some brother like Simon Peter, some sister dear to you who will listen to your unvarnished tale, and believe in your simple testimony. Though you be but young in grace, and but little instructed, begin the work of soul-winning, and—

*“Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found.”*

If the religion of Jesus Christ consisted in abstruse doctrines, hard to be understood, if the saving truths of Christianity were metaphysical points, difficult to handle, then a matured judgment would be needed in every worker for God, and it would be prudent to say to the young convert, “Hold back till you are instructed,” but since that which saves souls is as simple as A, B, C, since it is nothing but this, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved,” he that trusts the merits of Christ shall be saved. You that have trusted Him know that He saves you, and you know that He will save others, and I charge you before God, tell it, tell it right and left, but especially tell it to your own kinsfolk and acquaintances, that they also may find eternal life.

Andrew was a disciple, a new disciple, and I may add, *a commonplace disciple*, a man of average capacity. He was not at all the brilliant character that Simon Peter his brother turned out to be. Throughout the life of Jesus Christ Andrew’s name occurs, but no notable incident is connected therewith. Though in after-life he no doubt became a most useful apostle, and according to tradition sealed his life’s ministry by death upon a cross, yet at the first Andrew was, as to talent, an ordinary believer, one of that common standard and nothing remarkable. Yet Andrew became a useful minister, and thus it is clear that servants of Jesus Christ are not to excuse themselves from endeavoring to extend the boundaries of His kingdom by saying, “I have no remarkable talent, or singular ability.”

I very much disagree with those who decry ministers of slender gifts, sneering at them, as though they ought not to occupy the pulpit at all. Are we, after all, brethren, as servants of God, to be measured by mere oratorical ability? Is this after the fashion of Paul, when he renounced the wisdom of words lest the faith of the disciples should stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the Power of God? If you could blot out from the Christian church all the minor stars, and leave nothing but those of the first magnitude, the darkness of this poor world would be increased sevenfold.

How often the eminent preachers, which are the church’s delight, are brought into the church by those of less degree, even as Simon Peter was converted by Andrew! Who shall tell what might have become of Simon Peter if it had not been for Andrew? Who shall say that the church would ever have possessed a Peter if she had closed the mouth of Andrew? And who shall put their finger upon the brother or sister of inferior talent and say, “These must hold their peace”? Nay, brother, if you have but one talent, the more zealously use it. God will require it of you, let not your brethren hold you back from putting it out to interest. If you are but as a glowworm’s, lamp, hide not your light, for there is an eye predestinated to see by your light, a heart ordained to find comfort by your faint gleam. Shine you, and the Lord accept you.

I am putting it in this way that I may come to the conclusion that every single professor of the faith of Christ is bound to do something for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom. I would that all the members of this church, whatever their talents were, would be like Andrew in *promptness*. He is no sooner a convert than he is a missionary, no sooner taught than he begins to teach. I would have them like Andrew, *persevering*, as well as prompt. He first finds Peter—that is his first success, but how many afterwards he found, who shall tell? Throughout a long life of usefulness, it is probable that Andrew brought many stray sheep to the Redeemer’s fold, yet certainly that first one would be among the dearest

to his heart. “He first finds Peter:” he was the spiritual father of many sons, but he rejoiced most that he was the father of his own brother Peter—his brother in the flesh, but his son in Christ Jesus.

Could it be possible for me to come to every one of you personally, and grasp you by the hand, I would with most affectionate earnestness—yes, even with tears—pray you by Him to whom you owe your souls, awake and render personal service to the Lover of your souls, make no excuse, for no excuse can be valid from those who are bought with so great a price. Your business, you will tell me, requires so much of your thoughts—I know it does, then use your business in such a way as to serve God in it. Still there must be some scraps of time which you could devote to holy service, there must be some opportunities for directly aiming at conversions. I charge you to avail yourselves of such occasions, lest they be laid to your door.

To some of you the excuse of “business” would not apply, for you have seasons of leisure. Oh, I beseech you, let not that leisure be driveled away in frivolities, in mere talk, in sleep, and self-indulgence! Let not time slip away in vain persuasions that you can do nothing, or in the mere preparations for grand experiments, but now, like Andrew, hasten at once to serve Jesus, if you can reach but one individual, let him not remain unsought. Time is hastening and men are perishing. The world is growing old in sin. Superstition and idolatry root themselves into the very soil of human nature. When, when will the church become intent upon putting down her Master’s foes? Possessing such little strength, we cannot afford to waste a jot of it. With such awful demands upon us we cannot afford to trifle.

O that I had the power to stir the heart and soul of all my fellow Christians by a description of this huge city wallowing in iniquity, by a picture of the graveyards and cemeteries fattening on innumerable corpses, by a portrayal of that lake of fire to which multitudes yearly descend. Surely sin, the grave, and hell, are themes which might create a tingling even in the dull cold ear of death. O that I could set before you the Redeemer upon the cross dying to ransom souls! O that I could depict the heaven which sinners lose, and their remorse when they shall find themselves self-excluded! I would I could even set before you in vivid light the cases of your own sons and daughters, the spiritual condition of your own brothers and sisters, without Christ, and therefore without hope, unrenewed, and therefore “heirs of wrath even as others,” then might I expect to move each believer here to an immediate effort to pluck men as brands from the burning.

II. Having described the missionary disciple, we shall now speak briefly in the second place upon HIS GREAT OBJECTIVE.

The great objective of Andrew seems to have been to bring Peter to Jesus. This, too, should be the aim of every renewed heart—to bring our friends to *Jesus*, not to convert them to a party. There are certain unbrotherly sectarians, called “Brethren,” who compass sea and land to make proselytes from other churches. These are not merchants seeking goodly pearls in a legitimate fashion, but pirates who live by plunder, they must not excite our wrath so much as our pity, though it is difficult not to mingle with it something of disgust. While this world remains as wicked as it is, we need not be spending our strength as Christian denominations in attacking one another, it will be better for us to go and fight with the Canaanites than with rival tribes which should be one united Israel.

I should reckon it to be a burning disgrace if it could be said, “The large church under that man’s pastoral care is composed of members whom he has stolen away from other Christian churches.” No, but I value beyond all price the godless, the careless, who are brought out from the world into communion with Christ. These are true prizes, not stealthily removed from friendly shores, but captured at the edge of the sword from an enemy’s dominions. We welcome brethren from other churches if in the providence of God they are drifted to our shores, but we would never hang out the wrecker’s beacon to dash other churches in pieces in order to enrich ourselves with the wreck. Far rather would we be looking after perishing souls than cajoling unstable ones from their present place of worship. To recruit one regiment from another is no real strengthening of the army, to bring in fresh men should be the aim of all.

Furthermore, the objective of the soul-winner is not to bring men to an outward religiousness merely. Little will you have done for a man if you merely make the Sabbath-breaker into a Sabbath-keeper, and leave him a self-righteous Pharisee. Little will you have done for him if you persuade him, having been prayerless, to be a mere user of a form of prayer, his heart not being in it. You do but change the form of sin in which the man lives, you prevent him being drowned in the salt water, but you throw him into the fresh. You take one poison from him, but you expose him to another.

The fact is, if you would do real service to Christ, your prayer and your zeal must follow the person who has become the object of your attention, till you bring him absolutely to close with grace, and lay hold on Jesus Christ, and accept eternal life as it is found in the atoning sacrifice. Anything short of this may have its usefulness for this world, but must be useless for the world to come. To bring men to Jesus—O, be this your aim and mine!—not to bring them to baptism, nor to the meeting house, nor to adopt our form of worship, but to bring them to His dear feet who alone can say, “Go in peace; your sins which are many are all forgiven you.”

Brethren, as we believe Jesus to be the very center of the Christian religion, he who gets not to Christ gets not to true godliness at all. Some are quite satisfied if they get to the priest and obtain his absolution, if they get the sacraments, and eat bread in the church, if they get to prayers, and pass through a religious routine, but we know that all this is less than nothing and vanity, unless the heart draws near to Jesus. Unless the soul accepts Jesus as God’s appointed sin-offering and rests alone in Him, it walks in a vain show and disquiets itself in vain.

Come then, brethren, nerve yourselves to this point, that from this day forth let your one ambition be in dealing with your fellow men, to bring them to Jesus Christ Himself. Be it determined in your spirit that you will never cease to labor for them till you have reason to believe that they are trusting in Jesus, loving Jesus, serving Jesus, united to Jesus, in the hope that they shall be conformed to the image of Jesus and dwell with Him, world without end.

But some will say, “We can very clearly understand how Andrew brought Peter to the Lord, because Jesus was here among men, and they could walk together till they found Him.” Yes, but Jesus is not dead, and it is a mistake to suppose that He is not readily to be reached. Prayer is a messenger that can find Jesus at any hour. Jesus is gone up on high as to His body, but His spiritual presence remains to us, and the Holy Ghost as the head of this dispensation is always near at hand to every believer.

Intercede, then, for your friends. Plead with Christ on their account, mention their names in your constant prayers, set apart special times in which you plead with God for them. Let your dear sister’s case ring in the ears of the Mediator, let your dear child’s name be repeated again and again in your intercessions. As Abraham pleaded for Ishmael, so let your cry come up for those who are round about you, that the Lord would be pleased to visit them in His mercy.

Intercession is a true bringing of souls to Christ, and this means will avail when you are shut out from employing any other. If your dear ones are in Australia, in some settler’s hut where even a letter cannot reach them, prayer can find them out, no ocean can be too wide for prayer to span, no distance too great for prayer to travel. Far off as they are, you can take them up in the arms of believing prayer, and bear them to Jesus, and say, “Master, have mercy upon them.”

Here is a valuable weapon for those who cannot preach or teach, they can wield the sword of all-prayer. When hearts are too hard for sermons, and good advice is rejected, it still remains to love to be allowed to plead with God for its wayward one. Tears and weeping are prevalent at the mercy seat, and if *we* prevail there, the Lord will be sure to manifest His prevailing grace in obdurate spirits.

To bring men to Jesus you can adopt the next means, with most of them, namely, that of instructing them, or putting them in the way of being informed concerning the Gospel. It is a very wonderful thing that while to us the light of the Gospel is so abundant, it should be so very partially distributed in this country.

When I have expounded my own hope in Christ to two or three in a railway carriage, I have found myself telling my listeners perfect novelties. I have seen the look of astonishment upon the face of many

an intelligent Englishman when I have explained the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, persons who have attended their parish church from their youth up, I have met with, who were totally ignorant of the simple truth of justification by faith, ay, and some who have been to dissenting places of worship who do not seem to have laid hold of the fundamental truth that no man is saved by his own doings, but that salvation is procured by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

This nation is steeped up to the throat in self-righteous doctrine, and the Protestantism of Martin Luther is very generally unknown. The truth is held by as many as God's grace has called, but the great outlying world still talk of doing your best, and then hoping in God's mercy, and I know not what beside of legal self-confidence, while the master doctrine that he who believes in Jesus is saved by Jesus' finished work, is sneered at as enthusiasm, or attacked as leading to licentiousness.

Tell it, then, tell it on all sides, take care that none under your influence shall be left in ignorance of it. I can bear personal witness that the statement of the Gospel has often proved in God's hand enough to lead a soul into immediate peace.

Not many months ago I met with a lady holding sentiments of almost undiluted popery, and in conversing with her I was delighted to see how interesting and attractive a thing the Gospel was to her. She complained that she enjoyed no peace of mind as the result of her religion, and never seemed to have done enough. She had a high idea of priestly absolution, but it had evidently been quite unable to yield repose to her spirit. Death was feared. God was terrible, even Christ an object of awe rather than love.

When I told her that whosoever believes on Jesus is perfectly forgiven, and that I knew I was forgiven—that I was as sure of it as of my own existence, that I feared neither to live nor to die, for it would be the same to me, because God had given me eternal life in His Son, I saw that a new set of thoughts were astonishing her mind. She said, "If I could believe that, I should be the happiest person in the world."

I did not deny the inference, but claimed to have proved its truth, and I have reason to believe that the little simple talk we had has not been forgotten. You cannot tell how many may be in bondage for want of the simplest possible instruction upon the plainest truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Many, too, may be brought to Christ through your example. Believe me, there is no preaching in this world like the preaching of a holy life. It shames me sometimes, and weakens me in my testimony for my Master, when I stand here and recollect that some professors of religion are a disgrace not only to their religion, but even to common morality. It makes me feel as though I must speak with bated breath and trembling knees, when I remember the damnable hypocrisy of those who thrust themselves into the church of God, and by their abominable sins bring disgrace upon the cause of God and eternal destruction upon themselves. In proportion as a church is holy, in that proportion will its testimony for Christ be powerful.

Oh! were the saints immaculate, our testimony would be like fire among the stubble, like the flaming firebrand in the midst of the sheaves of corn. Were the saints of God less like the world, more disinterested, more prayerful, more godlike, the tramp of the armies of Zion would shake the nations, and the day of the victory of Christ would surely dawn. Freely might the church barter her most golden-mouthed preacher if she received in exchange men of apostolic life. I would be content that the pulpit should be empty if all the members of the church would preach Jesus by their patience in suffering, by their endurance in temptation, by exhibiting in the household those graces which adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Oh! so live, I pray you, in God's fear and by the Spirit's power, that they who see you may ask, "Whence has this man this holiness?" and may follow you till they are led by you to Jesus Christ to learn the secret by which men live unto God. You can bring men to Jesus by your example, then. And once again, let me say, before I close this point, our objective should be to bring men to Jesus, having tried intercession, and instruction, and example, by occasionally, as time and opportunity may serve us, giving a word of persistent entreaty. Half-a-dozen words from a tender mother to a boy, who is just

leaving home for an apprenticeship, may drop like gentle dew from heaven upon him. A few sentences from a kind and prudent father given to the daughter, still unconverted, as she enters upon her married life, and to her husband, kindly and affectionately put, may make that household forever a house for God. A kind word dropped by a brother to a sister, a little letter written from a sister to her brother, though it should be only a line or two, may be God's arrow of grace. I have known even such little things as a tear or an anxious glance work wonders.

You perhaps may have heard the story of Mr. Whitefield, who made it his habit wherever he stayed to talk to the members of the household about their souls—with each one personally, but stopping at a certain house of a Colonel, who was all that could be wished except a Christian, he was so pleased with the hospitality he received, and so charmed with the general character of the good Colonel and his wife and daughters, that he did not like to speak to them about a decision as he would have done if they had been less amiable characters.

He had stopped with them for a week, and during the last night, the Spirit of God visited him so that he could not sleep. "These people," he said, "have been very kind to me, and I have not been faithful to them, I must do it before I go, I must tell them that whatever good thing they have, if they do not believe in Jesus they are lost." He arose and prayed. After praying he still felt contention in his spirit. His old nature said, "I cannot do it," but the Holy Spirit seemed to say, "Leave them not without warning."

At last he thought of a device, and prayed God to accept it, he wrote upon a diamond-shaped pane of glass in the window with his ring these words—"One thing you lack." He could not bring himself to speak to them, but went his way with many a prayer for their conversion. He had no sooner gone than the good woman of the house, who was a great admirer of him, said, "I will go up to his room, I like to look at the very place where the man of God has been." She went up and noticed on the window pane those words, "One thing you lack." It struck her with conviction in a moment. "Ah!" she said, "I thought he did not care much about us, for I knew he always pleaded with those with whom he stopped, and when I found that he did not do so with us, I thought we had vexed him, but I see how it was, he was too tender in mind to speak to us."

She called her daughters up. "Look there, girls," she said, "see what Mr. Whitefield has written on the window, 'One thing you lack.' Call up your father." And the father came up and read that too, "One thing you lack!" and around the bed where the man of God had slept they all knelt down and sought that God would give them the one thing they lacked, and ere they left that chamber they had found that one thing, and the whole household rejoiced in Jesus. It is not long ago that I met with a friend, one of whose church members preserves that very pane of glass in her family as an heirloom.

Now, if you cannot admonish and warn in one way, do it in another, but take care to clear your soul of the blood of your relatives and friends, so that it may never crimson your skirts and accuse you before God's bar. So live, and so speak and teach, by some means or other, that you shall have been faithful to God and faithful to the souls of men.

III. I must now take you to a third point. We have had the missionary disciple and his great objective, we have now, thirdly, HIS WISE METHODS.

I have trenched upon this subject already, but I could not help it. Andrew being zealous was wise. Earnestness often gives prudence, and puts a man in the possession of tact, if not of talent. *Andrew used what ability he had.* If he had been as some young men are of my acquaintance, he would have said, "I would like to serve God. How I should like to preach! And I should require a large congregation." Well, there is a pulpit in every street in London, there is a most wide and effectual door for preaching in this great city of ours beneath God's blue sky. But this young zealot would rather prefer an easier berth than the open air, and because he is not invited to the largest pulpits, does nothing. How much better it would be if, like Andrew, he began to use the ability he had among those who are accessible to him, and from that stepped to something else, and from that to something else, advancing year by year!

Sirs, if Andrew had not been the means of converting his brother, the probabilities are that he never would have been an apostle. Christ had some reason in the choice of His apostles to their office, and

perhaps the ground of His choice of Andrew as an apostle was this, “He is an earnest man,” said he, “he brought Me Simon Peter, he is always speaking privately to individuals, I will make an apostle of him.” Now, you young men, if you become diligent in tract distribution, diligent in the Sunday school, you are likely men to be made into ministers, but if you stop and do nothing until you can do everything, you will remain useless—an impediment to the church instead of being a help to her.

Dear sisters in Jesus Christ, you must, none of you, dream that you are in a position in which you can do nothing at all. That were such a mistake in providence as God cannot commit. You must have some talent entrusted to you, and something given you to do which no one else can do. Out of this whole structure of the human body, every little muscle, every single cell, has its own secretion and its own work, and though some physicians have said this and that organ might be spared, I believe that there is not a single thread in the whole embroidery of human nature that could well be spared—the whole of the fabric is required.

So in the mystical body, the church, the least member is necessary, the most uncomely member of the Christian church is needful for its growth. Find out, then, what your sphere is and occupy it. Ask God to tell you what is your niche, and stand in it, occupying the place till Jesus Christ shall come and give you your reward. Use what ability you have, and use it at once.

Andrew proved his wisdom in that *he set great store by a single soul*. He bent all his efforts at first upon one man. Afterwards, Andrew, through the Holy Spirit, was made useful to scores, but he began with one. What a task for the mathematician, to value one soul! One soul sets all heaven’s bells ringing by its repentance. One sinner that repents makes angels rejoice. What if you spend a whole life pleading and laboring for the conversion of that one child? If you win that pearl it shall pay you your life worth.

Be not therefore dull and discouraged because your class declines in numbers, or because the mass of those with whom you labor reject your testimony. If a man could earn but one in a day he might be satisfied. “One what?” says one. I meant not one penny, but one thousand pounds. “Ah,” say you, “that would be an immense reward.” So if you earn but one soul you must reckon what that one is, it is one for numeration, but for value it exceeds all that earth could show. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul? And what loss would it be to you, dear brother, if you did lose all the world, and gained your soul, and God made you useful in the gaining of the souls of others? Be content and labor in your sphere, even if it be small, and you will be wise.

You may imitate Andrew in *not going far afield to do good*. Many Christians do all the good they can five miles off from their own house, when the time they take to go there and back might be well spent in the vineyard at home. I do not think it would be a wise regulation of the parochial authorities if they required the inhabitants of St. Mary, Newington, to remove the snow from the pavement of St. Pancras, and the inhabitants of St. Pancras to keep the pavement of St. Mary, Newington.

It is best and most convenient that each householder should sweep before his own door, so it is our duty to do, as believers, all the good we can in the place where God has been pleased to locate us, but especially in our own households. If every man has a claim upon me, much more my own offspring. If every woman has some demand upon me as to her soul, as far as my ability goes, much more such as are of my own flesh and blood. Piety must begin at home as well as charity. Conversion should begin with those who are nearest to us in ties of relationship.

Brethren and sisters, during this month I stir you up, not to be attempting missionary labors for India, not to be casting eyes of pity across to Africa, not to be occupied so much with tears for popish and heathen lands, as for your own children, your own flesh and blood, your own neighbors, your own acquaintances. Lift up your cry to heaven *for them*, and then afterwards you shall preach among the nations.

Andrew goes to Cappadocia in his after-life, but he begins with his brother, and you shall labor where you please in years to come, but first of all your own household, first of all those who are under your own shadow must receive your guardian care. Be wise in this thing, use the ability you have, and use it among those who are near at hand.

Perhaps somebody will be saying, “How did Andrew persuade Simon Peter to come to Christ”? Two or three minutes may be spent in answering that inquiry. He did so, first, by narrating his own personal experience, he said, “We have found the Messiah.” What you have experienced of Christ tell to others. He did so next by intelligently explaining to him what it was he had found. He did not say he had found someone who had impressed him, but he knew not who He was, he told him he had found Messiah, that is, Christ.

Be clear in your knowledge of the Gospel and your experience of it, and then tell the good news to those whose soul you seek. Andrew had power over Peter because of his own decided conviction. He did not say, “I hope I have found Christ,” but, “I have found Him.” He was sure of that. Get full assurance of your own salvation. There is no weapon like it. He who speaks doubtingly of what he would convince another, asks that other to doubt his testimony. Be positive in your experience and your assurance, for this will help you.

Andrew had power over Peter because he put the good news before him in an earnest fashion. He did not say to him, as though it were a commonplace fact, “The Messiah has come,” but no, he communicated it to him as the most weighty of all messages with becoming tones and gestures, I doubt not, “We have found the Messiah, which is called Christ.” Now then, brethren and sisters, to your own kinsfolk tell your belief, your enjoyments, and your assurance, tell all judiciously, with assurance of the truth of it, and who can tell whether God may not bless your work?

IV. My time is past, or I meant to have spoken of THE SWEET REWARD Andrew had.

His reward being that he won a soul, won his brother’s soul, won such a treasure! He won no other than that Simon, who at the first cast of the Gospel net, when Christ had made him a soul-fisherman, caught three thousand souls at a single haul! Peter, a very prince in the Christian church, one of the mightiest of the servants of the Lord in all his later usefulness, would be a comfort to Andrew. I should not wonder but what Andrew would say in days of doubt and fear, “Blessed be God that He has made Peter so useful! Blessed be God that ever I spoke to Peter! What I cannot do, Peter will help to do, and while I sit down in my helplessness, I can feel thankful that my dear brother Peter is honored in bringing souls to Christ.”

In this house today there may sit an unconverted Whitefield, in your class this afternoon there may be an unsaved John Wesley, a Calvin, and a Luther, mute and inglorious, yet who is to be called by grace, through you. Your fingers are yet to wake to ecstasy the living lyre of a heart that up till now has not been tuned to the praise of Christ, you are to kindle the fire which shall light up a sacred sacrifice of a consecrated life to Christ. Only be up and doing for the Lord Jesus, be persistent and prayerful, be zealous and self-sacrificing.

Unite with us, during this month, in your daily prayers, constantly, while in business, let your hearts go up for the blessing, and I make no doubt of it, that when we have proved our God by prayer, he will pour us down such a blessing that we shall not have room to receive it. The Lord make it so, for His name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 1:19-51.

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.