

“THE GOSPEL AWAKENING.”

COMPRISING THE

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES,

Prayer Meeting Talks and Bible Readings,

OF THE

GREAT REVIVAL MEETINGS,

CONDUCTED BY

MOODY AND SANKEY,

IN THE CITIES OF

Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston,

WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CONVENTIONS OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

From Verbatim Reports by our own Phonographer, and those of the New York Tribune, Chicago Inter-Ocean, Boston Journal and Boston Globe.

ALSO THE LIVES OF

D. L. MOODY, I. D. SANKEY, P. P. BLISS, REV. JOSEPH COOK,
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HOW TO HELP INQUIRERS.

I've chosen as my subject this morning: "How to hold an Inquiry Meeting; or, what are the best adapted Texts of Scripture to be dwelt upon at these meetings?" Of course, I am not going to quote all the texts that could be used, and to good advantage; I am just going to bring to mind some few of the best ones. And what I want first to call your attention to, if you are going to be successful in winning souls to Christ, is the need for discrimination in finding out people's differences. People are not the same in their wants spiritual more than temporal. What is good for one is rank poison for another. You can't treat all alike. I've a friend that always, when he is sick, drinks a lot of hot water, and goes to bed. Another says to me, Just take this dose and you will get well. It don't make any difference what's the matter with you, this friend has one single remedy. So, many a man has just one verse of Scripture; he's always quoting it. It fits his case, and he thinks it does everybody else's. A man I knew up in Wisconsin was converted under a railway bridge; and to this day he keeps urging people to go right down under that bridge, if they want to get converted sure. But God never repeats himself. No two thoughts are just alike; no two needs are just alike; no two sinners are going to come to Christ in the same precise way. Instead of looking for others' experiences, look for one for yourself. So, when talking to persons in the inquiry-room, you must find out just these differences. Now, I am going to divide inquirers into classes or divisions this morning, and point out a few passages suitable for each.

The first class, I think, in point of numbers, is that of the doubters—those who are always in Doubting Castle. And these generally are among professing Christians. Oh, I think we shall make a different start with these when we get to Boston, from what we did here. I'm convinced we made a mistake here, in not opening the inquiry-rooms for professing Christians first. For twenty or thirty years they have been living on, making empty professions. Now, they just want to get off their crutches, and get to walking and running for Christ. I don't believe they can accomplish much; I know they can't, if they continue in this half-dead state. If Christians haven't assurance, they are just stumbling blocks; they are in the way of the work. How many hurts these professing Christians give, who show no sign of their faith! They have no joy in serving the Lord; and their children, with reason, say, "I don't want that kind of a religion." And here I want to call your attention to a proper remedy for this class, to be found in the book of John. That whole book was written for this one thing, to help people out of Doubting Castle, and teach them that they may know they are saved. Only Friday last I met a woman, a prominent member of a prominent church, who said it was presumption to say with certainty that we are saved. I said it was presumption to

say that we are not saved, when we have the very word of the Lord Jesus Christ for it. Oh, if you will just read those precious words: "He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life;" and then turn to those other divine words: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God:" if you will just read these sure words of God, you will not talk about having no assurance as to your salvation. Just believe in the words of the Son of God, and you know right now that you are saved. You know right now, I say, and don't have to put it off till you are going to die. Therefore, I would talk to these doubting citizens about the Epistle of John. I would say to you, persuade them to take these words of Jesus: "They have passed from death to life." Oh, yes, it is the privilege of every child of God to know that he is saved.

The next class are the backsliding. They do not want so much assurance as reviving. I know a lady who has a homeopathic doctor's book, and whenever she is at all out of sorts she goes right to it. In spiritual things there is a good remedy for all sorts, and for the backsliders as well. Though they have left God, he makes a way for them to return. I have just turned down the leaves of my Bible at the 2d and 3d chapters of Jeremiah. I don't think any one can feel this way with that Bible in hand. "Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity and are become vain?" Now, what did Christ ever do against you? Did he ever lie to you? Did he ever abuse you? Did he ever deceive you? Only one man ever said that, and he was out of his head, and any one would know he was. No man can accuse Christ of any bias or offense. "What iniquity have you found in me?" None at all. The trouble has been with ourselves. It was he that brought the early Church through the wilderness, through all the dangers of the way, and into the promised land. It is he that gives you power and lifts you up. Oh, say, then, what evil or iniquity have you found in him? The trouble is with you, O backsliders, who "have forsaken the fountains of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." The 19th verse says: "Thine own wickedness shall convict thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of Hosts." Enforce the miseries of this text, and then use the exhortation of the 3rd chapter, 22nd verse: "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding. Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." And then the 14th verse: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God." I remember repeating these promises to a backslider; and he couldn't believe them at first, for joy. How tender these words

of Scripture to the backslider! Bring these words right to bear on them, and tell how God pleads with them. Read to them the opening words of Hosea, 14th chapter: “Return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity; say unto him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously. * * I (God) will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away.” Then bring up the story of the Prodigal for illustration; also the apostle Peter, how he was drawn to God after grievously backsliding, and how he was even admitted to the blessings of Pentecost. Then say: “You, too, can be restored if you only believe, and God will yet make you a blessing to believers.”

The third class are those who are not stricken by their sins; who have no deep conviction of guilt. Just bring the law of God to bear on these, and show them themselves in their true light. Repeat Romans, 3d chapter, 10th verse: “There is none righteous, no, not one;” also the succeeding verses; and then repeat from Isaiah: “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores.” And then bring in that verse, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” Don’t try to heal the wound before the hurt is felt. You may, perhaps, get but few satisfactory inquirers in this way; but what you do get are worth something. If a man don’t see his guilt, he won’t be a valuable or true convert. Read him the first chapter of 1 John, 10th verse: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us;” and hold him right to it. Don’t attempt to give the consolations of the gospel until your converts see they have sinned—see it, and feel it. I met a man who expressed doubts about his being much of a sinner. “Well,” said I, “let’s find out if you have sinned. Do you swear?” “Well, as a general rule, I only swear when I got mad,” “Yes, yes; but what does the Lord say about not holding a man guiltless that swears? Believe me, he will hold you responsible for that; bear that in mind. You must be able to hold your temper, but if not, beware to take the name of God in vain. Are you not now a sinner?” And the man was convinced. Sometimes, too, I’ve found a merchant this way; and yet one openly confessed to me that he did cheat sometimes. “You lie, then, don’t you?” said I. He didn’t want to put it quite so plainly, but pretty soon saw it in my light. Oh yes; enforce this truth kindly but firmly, that our natural hearts are black and deceitful as hell. Man must say from his heart, “I have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

The fourth class are those completely broken down by a sense of sin; those who have too much conviction of sin distinguished from the preceding inquirers, who haven’t enough. One of these tells you that God can’t save such as he. Then you have to prove his mistake, and show that God can save to the uttermost. Take the 1st chapter of Isaiah, 18th verse: “Come now, and

let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Just turn your Bible right over to that passage, and many such passages in Isaiah; they will all help in the inquiry-room. The 43d chapter, 25th verse, says: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And the 22d verse of the next chapter is stronger: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." Make the anxious soul believe that God has blotted out his sins as a thick cloud; make him see the dense cloud vanishing, as it were, from the face of the sun, vanishing forever; that cloud can never come up again; others may, but that old cloud of the past guilt is dissolved forever; the Lord himself has blotted it out. Use the two verses, John i., 11, 12: "He came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The idea is, that those fearing ones cannot serve God until they receive Christ fully as their salvation; it won't do for them to merely take up with some minister, or church, or creed. The minister dies or moves away; the only lasting resource is in Christ at the right hand of God, where he will never forsake his own. Yes, press Jesus upon these anxious souls. Tell them "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc. "So loved the world;" that includes them. If they inhabited some other land they might tremble; but they are on this earth, for all the sons and daughters of which Christ died, the just for the unjust. Use, also, the text: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words and believeth on him that sent me shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." Now, some people do not just understand believing in Christ. They believe Christ came as an historical being, as Moses and Elijah came. They believe the Cunard line of steamers will take them to Liverpool in twelve or fourteen days. But these beliefs don't make men good; they are head beliefs only. They are not what your inquirers want. What you and they want is heart belief; or, in other words, to just trust Christ to save you. Sometimes people can't digest the word "belief;" then let them take this sweet word "trust." From Isaiah 26: 3, 4, read to them: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." By trusting in him, you see we have everlasting strength. You must get them to trust and believe entirely in Christ, and not try to save themselves. They cannot save themselves by their feelings; assure them of that. There is not a word of warrant for such a thought, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation. Oh, it is much better to trust in the precious, changeless Word of God than in our own changing feelings. Thank God, that this is also our duty!

Then you hear some inquirers say, “I haven’t got strength sufficient.” But Christ died to be their strength. A loving hand will support them in the Christian journey, and “His strength will be made perfect in weakness.” Bid such be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

And then another class, that cannot be saved in this way, they think, because doubting instantaneous conversion. Read to such from Romans,—the 6th chapter, 23d verse: “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” Salvation is a gift, and so must have a definite point in time. I say, “Will you take this Bible?” You must first make up your mind to take it, and then reach out and—the work of an instant—grasp the gift. Just so with God’s best gift, salvation; to take it is the work of an instant, and your inquirer may have it for the asking. “Let him that heareth say come;” “Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely.” With the gift, God gives the power to take it. When we get before the tribunal of the great white throne, we will have to answer for it if we refuse to take it. This is the richest jewel that heaven has; God gives up his Son to be our Savior.

Another class say to you and me, when, in the inquiry-room, we press them to openly confess Christ, “We’re afraid we won’t hold out.” Say to these repeatedly that blessed text, “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling.” Think, and tell them to think, of the thousands who never fall. The idea that it is necessary to fall into sin is wrong. Then take those passages: “I, the Lord thy God, will take thy right hand;” “Fear not, I will lead thee;” and, “I am persuaded that he will be able to keep them that are committed unto him against that day.” Let a man just trust the Lord to keep him from falling, and he will do it. Suppose I have a hundred thousand dollars with me; it’s all I have in the world; thieves are after it, and I’m quaking every minute lest they get it. I find my banker here, and I say: “Here, take it quick; I can’t keep my money but by your help; I wish you would hurry and put it in the vault; when it’s deposited there, and not before, I shall be safe.” Is not this the way to give our all into God’s keeping? Is not this the way to live secure from temptation and backsliding? In God’s keeping, we are safe. “Our life is hid with Christ in God?” Oh, let us each make this deposit of our personal trust this morning; trust him entirely, and then we can the better lead inquirers in the same way. Jesus can hold us close to himself. “Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” If you just take up the words of Christ in the book of Romans, love and peace and joy flow out. One verse tells of love; the next of joy; the next and next of the peace that comes from believing, Romans, 4th chapter and 28th verse, and all those verses along there, might be read. The result of believing is joy, rest, and peace. John 15: 11—that is joy; Matthew 11: 28—that is rest; John 14: 27—that is peace.

Never, however, tell a man he is converted. Never tell him he is saved. Let him find that out from heaven. You can't afford to deceive one about this great question. But you can help his faith and trust, and lead him right. I find that those in the inquiry-room do best who do not run about from one to another, offering words of encouragement everywhere. They would better go to but one or two of an afternoon, or evening. We are building for eternity, and can take time. The work will not then be superficial. If it is so, it will not be the fault of the workers or preachers. And then, to do all our duty; we must talk more of restitution. I don't think we preach enough the need of our making good to one another injuries to person, property, or feeling. If you have done one a detriment, you must go and pay it back or make it up, if it is a tangible loss; and if it is a wound to the feelings, fully apologize. It is a good deal better to go up and do the fair thing, whatever the result. It may be that some will refuse such amends; but it is our duty to offer them. But in the end, a complete reconciliation from such a course is almost sure to result. The antipathy supposed to exist on the other side is often only imagined. You need not expect that God is going to forgive you, if you don't forgive others. We say daily, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;" and we must show that we understand this conditional request. What if God should take us at our word, and just forgive us to the extent to which our small grievances are forgiven! And this he surely will do; so let us be wise. A young lady in Michigan, at a recent revival service, was troubled greatly, and to kind inquiries at last confessed that her unwillingness to confess Christ resulted from a school-room quarrel, which was still unsettled. She felt she couldn't forgive her enemy, but at last told her trouble and asked for advice. "Must she forgive her mate?" "Certainly, if you want God's forgiveness," was the answer of the minister, and immediately she ran with all her might to her old friend; and, instead of meeting a cold reception, they were soon crying on each other's necks. And so it always should be; and most always there will be the same prompt half-way meeting between those aggrieved. My wife was laboring in the inquiry-room, the other evening, with a lady who was in just this state of mind, and very soon reparation and complete reconciliation was effected; and two old friends walked off arm in arm, happier than ever before this little misunderstanding. And one of these ladies felt so strong in her new-found charity for all, that she won over her husband; and last Sunday he openly in the Tabernacle confessed Christ, remembering that "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Many more texts, did time allow, might be cited, all applicable to anxious inquirers.

But one word more. Do not let a man go out of the inquiry-room without praying with him. Fear not, but do the work boldly. There was a man the other day who said, "I don't believe there's any God." The resolute Christian worker, to whom he spoke, answered impetuously, "I will just ask God to

shake you—to just shake this demon out of you.” And down he fell on his knees by the poor infidel, and prayed with loud earnestness. The man began to shake from head to foot; it was God shaking him. And by just these means, more than any others, skeptics and infidels will know there is a God. Let me say a word to those ministers that have not gone, and do not go, into the inquiry-room. Many in your flocks, never seeing you there, think you are not in sympathy with this work, and then begin to think you don’t care anything about their salvation. They feel in bondage, and do not go to help them. Well, there was a minister in a city we visited who did not “condescend” to be seen in our humble Tabernacle. He would have nothing to do with us. One day he was at a dinner party where they were discussing our work. Said he: “That sort of thing is good enough for those people; but it would never do for me.” “Well,” said another clergyman of the same belief, “fifty-seven of your congregation stood up in the tabernacle for prayers today, and all of them afterward went into the inquiry room.” The cultured and popular pastor of those Christians could not kill the humane promptings to be charitable to all professing the name of Christ and to worship along with such, even in perhaps irregular modes. But with the cordial co-operation of every Christian pastor in the Tabernacle and inquiry-room, what limit would there be to the Christian inroads on the citadels of sin? Oh, make it a duty, all of you, to talk to some soul at every meeting in these blessed inquiry rooms. Don’t take those in a position in life above your own, but take those on the same footing. Bend all your endeavors to answer for poor, struggling souls that question of all importance to them, “What must I do to be saved?” Yes, this is the question. What else but to answer it brought out these thousands at this early hour! My friends, God is with you in this work. Go on more diligently and implicitly trusting in him; go on to a more and more glorious harvest.