

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOW TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Jesus said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew iv. 19.

WHEN Christ calls us by His grace we ought not only to remember what we are, but we ought also to *think of what He can make us*. It is, “Follow Me, and I will *make you*.” We should repent of what we have been, but rejoice in what we may be. It is not, “Follow Me because of what you already are.” It is not, “Follow Me because you may make something of yourselves,” but, “Follow Me because of what I will make you.” Verily, I might say of each one of us, as soon as we are converted, “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into Apostles; that men so handy with the net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and in instructing converts! One would have said, “How can these things be? You cannot make founders of Churches out of peasants of Galilee!” That is exactly what Christ did and when we are brought low in the sight of God by a sense of *our own* unworthiness, we may feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what He can make us.

What did the woman of a sorrowful spirit say when she lifted up her song? “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill to set them among princes.” We cannot tell what God may make of us in the new creation since it would have been quite impossible to have foretold what He made of chaos in the old creation! Who could have imagined all the beautiful things that came forth from darkness and disorder by that one fiat, “Let there be light”? And who can tell what lovely displays of everything that is divinely fair may yet appear in a man’s formerly dark life when God’s grace has said to him, “Let there be light”? O you who see in yourselves at present nothing that is desirable, come and follow Christ for the sake of what He can make out of you! Do you not hear His sweet voice

calling to you and saying, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”?

Note, next, that *we are not made all that we shall be*, nor all that we ought to *desire* to be when we are, ourselves, fished for and caught. This is what the grace of God does for us at first, but it is not all. We are like the fishes, making sin to be our element, and the good Lord comes and, with the Gospel net, He takes us and delivers us from the life and love of sin. But He has not worked for us all that He can do, nor all that we should wish Him to do when He has done this, for it is another and a higher miracle to make us, who were fish, to become fishers! To make the saved ones saviours—to make the convert into a converter—the receiver of the Gospel into an imparter of that same Gospel to other people. I think I may say to every person whom I am addressing—if you are saved, the work is but half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ! You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained to the full development of the Christ-life in you unless you have commenced, in some feeble way, to tell others of the grace of God—and I trust that you will find no rest for the soles of your feet till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Saviour, who is your confidence and your hope!

His word is—Follow Me, not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified, but, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Be following Christ with that intent and aim—and fear that you are not perfectly following Him unless, in some degree, He is making use of you to be fishers of men. The fact is that every one of us must take to the business of a man-catcher. If Christ has caught us, we must catch others. If we have been apprehended by Him, we must be His constables, to apprehend rebels for Him! Let us ask Him to give us grace to go fishing and so to cast our nets that we may take a great multitude of fish. Oh that the Holy Spirit may raise up from among us some master fishermen who shall sail their boats in many a sea and surround great shoals of fish!

My teaching at this time will be very simple, but I hope it will be eminently practical, for my longing is that not one of you that love the Lord may be backward in *servicing* Him. What does the Song of Solomon say concerning certain sheep that come up from the washing? It says, “Every one bears twins, and none is barren among them.” May that be so with all the members of this Church and all the Christian people that hear or read this sermon. The fact is, the day is very dark. The heavens are lowering with heavy thunderclouds. Men little dream of what tempests may soon shake this city and the whole social fabric of this land—even to a general breaking up of society. So dark may the night become that the stars may seem to fall like blighted fruit from the trees. The times are evil! Now, if never before, every glow-worm must show its spark. You with the tiniest farthing candle must take it from under the bushel and set it on a candlestick. There is need of you

all! Lot was a poor creature. He was a very, very wretched kind of believer, but still, he might have been a great blessing to Sodom had he but pleaded for it as he should have done.

And poor, poor Christians, as I fear many are, one begins to value every truly converted soul in these evil days and to pray that each one may glorify the Lord. I pray that every righteous man, vexed as he is with the conversation of the wicked, may be more importunate in prayer than he has ever been, return to his God and get more spiritual life, that he may be a blessing to the perishing people around him. I address you, therefore, at this time, first of all upon this thought. Oh! that the Spirit of God may make each one of you feel his personal responsibility!

Here is for believers in Christ, in order to their usefulness, *something for them to do*. “Follow Me.” But, secondly, here is *something to be done by their great Lord and Master*—“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men! You will not grow into fishermen by yourselves, but this is what *Jesus* will do for you if you will but follow Him. And then, lastly, here is *a good illustration*, used according to our great Master’s custom, for scarcely without a parable did He speak to the people. He presents us with an illustration of what Christian men should be—*fishers of men*. We may get some useful hints out of it and I pray the Holy Spirit to bless them to us.

I. First, then, I will take it for granted that every believer here wants to be useful. If he does not, I take leave to question whether he can be a true believer in Christ. Well, then, if you want to be really useful, here is SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO TO THAT END—“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

What is the way to become an efficient preacher? “Young man,” says one, “go to college.” “Young man,” says Christ, “*follow Me*, and I will make you a fisher of men.” How is a person to be useful? “Attend a training class,” says one. Quite right, but there is a surer answer than that—Follow Jesus and He will make you fishers of men. The great training school for Christian workers has Christ at its head—not only as a Tutor, but as a Leader—we are not only to learn of Him in study, but to *follow* Him in action. “*Follow Me, and I will* make you fishers of men.” The direction is very distinct and plain—and I believe that it is exclusive, so that no man can become a fisherman by any other process. This process may appear to be very simple, but assuredly it is most efficient. The Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all about fishing for men was, Himself, the dictator of the rule, “Follow Me, if you want to be fishers of men. If you would be useful, keep in My tracks.”

I understand this, first, in this sense—*be separate unto Christ*. These men were to leave their pursuits. They were to leave their companions. They were, in fact, to quit the world so that their one business might be, in their Master’s

name, to be fishers of men. We are not all called to leave our daily business, or to quit our families. That might be rather running away from the fishery than working at it in God's name. But we are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, to be separate and not to touch the unclean thing. We cannot be fishers of men if we remain among men in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers! The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man and, what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world. If you are of the world, no doubt the world will love its own, but you cannot save the world. If you are dark and belong to the kingdom of darkness, you cannot remove the darkness. If you march with the armies of the wicked one, you cannot defeat them.

I believe that one reason why the Church of God, at this present moment, has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church. Nowadays we hear Nonconformists pleading that they may do this and they may do that—things which their Puritan forefathers would rather have died at the stake than have tolerated! They plead that they may live like worldlings and my sad answer to them, when they crave for this liberty, is, "Do it if you dare! It may not do you much hurt, for you are so bad, already. Your cravings show how rotten your hearts are. If you have a hungering after such dog's meat, go, dogs, and eat the garbage! Worldly amusements are fit food for mere pretenders and hypocrites. If you were God's children, you would loathe the very *thought* of the world's evil joys and your question would not be, "How far may we be like the world?" but your one cry would be, "How far can we get away from the world? How much can we come out from it?"

Your temptation would be rather to become sternly severe and ultra-Puritanical in your separation from sin, in such a time as this, than to ask, "How can I make myself like other men and act as they do?" Brothers, the use of the Church in the world is that it should be like salt in the midst of putrefaction—but if the salt has lost its savour, what is the good of it? If it were possible for salt, itself, to putrefy, it could but be an increase and a heightening of the general putridity. The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the flood—for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner. Your duty as a Christian is to stand fast in your own place and stand out for God, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Yours must be a resolve, like one of old, that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

Come, children of God, you *must* stand out with your Lord outside the camp. Jesus calls to you, today, and says, "Follow Me." Was Jesus found at the theatre? Did He frequent the sports of the racecourse? Was Jesus seen,

do you think, in any of the amusements of the Herodian court? Not He! He was “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” In one sense no one mixed with sinners so completely as He did, when, like a physician, He went among them healing his patients, but, in another sense, there was a gulf fixed between the men of the world and the Saviour which He never crossed and which they could not cross to defile Him. The first lesson which the Church has to learn is this—follow Jesus into the separated state and He will make you fishers of men. Unless you take up your cross and protest against an ungodly world, you cannot hope that the holy Jesus will make you fishers of men.

A second meaning of our text is very obviously this—*abide with Christ* and then you will be made fishers of men. These disciples whom Christ called were to come and live with Him. They were to be associated with Him every day. They were to hear Him publicly teach the everlasting Gospel and, in addition, they were to receive choice explanations in private of the Word which He had spoken. They were to be His servants and His familiar friends. They were to see His miracles and hear His prayers and, better still, they were to be with Him and become one with Him in His holy labour. It was given to them to sit at the table with Him and even to have their feet washed by Him! Many of them fulfilled that Word of God, “Where you dwell I will dwell”—they were with Him in His afflictions and persecutions. They witnessed His secret agonies. They saw His many tears. They marked the passion and the compassion of His soul and thus, after their measure, they caught His spirit—and so they learned to be fishers of men.

At Jesus’ feet we must learn the art and mystery of soul-winning. To live with Christ is the best education for usefulness. It is a great blessing to any man to be associated with a Christian minister whose heart is on fire. The best training for a young man is that which the Vaudois pastors were known to give when each old man had a young man with him, who walked with him whenever he went up the mountainside to preach. He lived in the house with him and marked his prayers and saw his daily piety. This was a fine instruction, was it not? But it does not compare with that of the Apostles who lived with Jesus, Himself, and were His daily companions. Matchless was the training of the twelve. No wonder that they became what they were with such a heavenly Tutor to saturate them with His own Spirit. And now, today, His bodily presence is not among us, but His spiritual power is, perhaps, more fully known to us than it was to those Apostles in those two or three years of the Lord’s corporeal presence.

There are some of us to whom He is intimately near. We know more about Him than we do about our dearest earthly friend. We have never been quite able to read our friend’s heart in all its twists and turns, but we know the heart of the Well-Beloved! We have leaned our head upon His bosom

and have enjoyed fellowship with Him such as we could not have with any of our own kith and kin! This is the most sure method of learning how to do good. Live with Jesus, follow Jesus and He will make you fishers of men! Watch how He does the work and so learn how to do it yourself. A Christian man should be bound apprentice to Jesus to learn the trade of a saviour. We can never save men by offering a redemption, for we have none to present, but we can learn how to save men by warning them to flee from the wrath to come and setting before them the One great effectual remedy. Watch how Jesus saves and you will learn how the thing is done—there is no learning it anyway else. Live in fellowship with Christ and there shall be about you an air and a manner as of one who has been made in heart and mind apt to teach and wise to win souls.

A third meaning, however, must be given to this, “Follow Me,” and it is this—“*Obey Me*, and then you shall know what to do to save men.” We must not talk about our fellowship with Christ, or our being separated from the world unto Him unless we make Him our Master and Lord in everything. Some public teachers are not true in all points to their convictions, so how can *they* look for a blessing? A Christian man, anxious to be useful, ought to be very particular as to every point of obedience to his Master. I have no doubt whatever that God blesses our churches even when they are very faulty, for His mercy endures forever. When there is a measure of error in the teaching and a measure of mistake in the practice, He may still vouchsafe to use the ministry, for He is very gracious. But a large measure of blessing must necessarily be withheld from all teaching which is knowingly or glaringly faulty. God can set His seal upon the Truth that is in it, but He *cannot set* His seal upon the *error* that is in it! Out of mistakes about Christian ordinances and other things, especially errors in heart and spirit, there may come evils which we never looked for. Such evils may even now be telling upon the present age and may work worse mischief upon future generations. If we desire, as fishers of men, to be largely used of God, we must copy our Lord Jesus in everything and obey Him in *every point*.

Failure in obedience may lead to failure in success. Each one of us, if he would wish to see his child saved, or his Sunday school class blessed, or his congregation converted, must take care that, bearing the vessels of the Lord, he is, himself, clean. Anything we do that grieves the Spirit of God must take away from us some part of our power for good. The Lord is very gracious and full of pity, but He is a jealous God. He is sometimes sternly jealous towards His people who are living in neglect of known duties, or in associations which are not clean in His sight. He will wither their work, weaken their strength and humble them until, at last, they say, “My Lord, I will take Your way after all. I will do what You bid me to do, for otherwise You will not accept me.” The Lord said to His disciples, “Go into all the

world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptised shall be saved.” And He promised them that signs would follow and so they did follow them and so they will.

And so we must get back to Apostolic practice and to Apostolic teaching—we must lay aside the commandments of men and the whims of our own brains and we must do *what* Christ tells us, *as* Christ tells us and *because* Christ tells us! Definitely and distinctly we must take the place of *servants*—and if we will not do that, we cannot expect our Lord to work *with* us or *by* us. Let us be determined that, as true as the needle is to the pole, so true will we be, as far as our light goes, to the command of our Lord and Master. Jesus says—“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” By this teaching He seems to say—“Go beyond Me, or fall behind Me, and you may cast the net; but it shall be night with you and that night you shall take nothing. When you shall do as I bid you, you shall cast your net on the right side of the ship and you shall find.”

Again, I think that there is a great lesson in my text to those who preach their own thoughts instead of preaching the thoughts of Christ. These disciples were to follow Christ that they might listen to Him, hear what He had to say, drink in His teaching and then *go and teach what He had taught them*. Their Lord says, “What I tell you in darkness, speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.” If they will be faithful reporters of Christ’s message, He will make them “fishers of men.” But you know the boastful method nowadays is this—“I am not going to preach this old, old Gospel, this musty Puritan doctrine. I will sit down in my study, burn the midnight oil and invent a new theory—then I will come out with my brand new thought and blaze away with it.” Many are not following Christ, but following themselves—and of them the Lord may well say, “You shall see whose word shall stand, Mine or theirs.”

Others are wickedly prudent and judge that certain Truths which are evidently God’s Word had better be kept back. You must not be rough, but must prophesy smooth things. To talk about the punishment of sin, to speak of eternal punishment, why, these are unfashionable doctrines! It may be that they are taught in the Word of God, but they do not suit the genius of the age. We must pare them down. Brothers in Christ, I will have no share in this! Will you? O my Soul, come not into their secret! Certain things not taught in the Bible, our enlightened age has discovered. Evolution may be clean contrary to the teaching of Genesis, but that does not matter! We are not going to be believers of Scripture, but original thinkers. This is the vain-glorious ambition of the period! Mark you, in proportion as the modern theology is preached, the vice of this generation increases.

To a great degree, I attribute the looseness of the age to the laxity of the doctrine preached by its teachers. From the pulpit they have taught the people

that sin is a trifle. From the pulpit these traitors to God and to His Christ have taught the people that there is no Hell to be feared! A little, little Hell, perhaps, there may be—but just punishment for sin is made nothing of. The precious atoning sacrifice of Christ has been derided and misrepresented by those who were pledged to preach it. They have given the people the name of the Gospel, but the Gospel, itself, has evaporated in their hands. From hundreds of pulpits the Gospel is as clean gone as the dodo from its old haunts—and still the preachers take the position and name of Christ’s ministers! Well, and what comes of it? Why, their congregations grow thinner and thinner—and so it must be. Jesus says, “Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men,” but if you go in your own way, with your own net, you will make nothing of it and the Lord promises you no help in it. The Lord’s directions make Himself our Leader and Example. It is, “Follow Me, follow Me! Preach My Gospel. Preach what I preached. Teach what I taught and keep to that.” With that blessed servility which becomes one whose ambition it is to be a copyist and never to be an original, copy Christ even in jots and tittles. Do this and He will make you fishers of men. But if you do *not* do this, you shall fish in vain.

I close this head of discourse by saying that we shall not be fishers of men unless we follow Christ in one other respect and that is, by endeavouring, in all points, to *imitate His holiness*. Holiness is the most real power that can be possessed by men or women. We may preach orthodoxy, but we must also *live* orthodoxy. God forbid that we should preach anything else, but it will be all in vain unless there is a life at the back of the testimony. An unholy preacher may even render the Truth of God contemptible! In proportion as any of us draw back from a living and zealous sanctification, we shall draw back from the place of power. Our power lies in this word, “Follow Me.” Be Jesus-like! In all things endeavour to think, speak and act as Jesus did—and He will make you fishers of men. This will require self-denial. We must daily take up the cross. This may require willingness to give up our reputation—readiness to be called fools, idiots and the like, as men are apt to call those who are keeping close to their Master. There must be the cheerful resigning of *everything* that looks like honour and personal glory in order that we may be wholly Christ’s and glorify His name.

We must live His life and be ready to die His death, if need be. O brothers, sisters, if we do this and follow Jesus, putting our feet into the footprints of His pierced feet, He will make us fishers of men. If it should so please Him that we should even die without having gathered many souls to the Cross, we shall speak from our graves. In some way or other the Lord will make a holy life to be an influential life. It is not possible that a life which can be described as a following of Christ should be an unsuccessful one in the sight of the Most High. “Follow Me,” and there is a, “I will,” such as God can never draw

back from—"Follow Me, and *I will* make you fishers of men."

Thus much on the first point. There is something for us to do—we are graciously called to follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, lead us to do it!

II. But secondly, and briefly, there is SOMETHING FOR THE LORD TO DO. When His dear servants are following Him, He says, "I will make you fishers of men," and be it *never* forgotten that *it is He that makes us follow Him*, so that if the following of Him is the step to being made a fisher of men, yet He gives this to us. 'Tis all of His Spirit. I have talked about catching His spirit, abiding in Him, obeying Him, listening to Him and copying Him—but none of these things are we capable of apart from His working them all in us. "From Me is your fruit found," is a text which we must not, for a moment, forget. So, then, if we do follow Him, it is He that makes us follow Him and so *He makes us fishers of men*.

But, further, if we follow Christ, He will make us fishers of men *by all our experience*. I am sure that the man who is really consecrated to bless others will be helped in this by all that he feels, especially by his afflictions. I often feel very grateful to God that I have undergone fearful depression of spirits. I know the borders of despair and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone—but hundreds of times I have been able to give a helpful grip to brothers and sisters who have come into that same condition, which grip I could never have given if I had not known their deep despondency myself. So I believe that the darkest and most dreadful experience of a child of God will help him to be a fisher of men if he will but follow Christ. Keep close to your Lord and He will make every step a blessing to you.

If God, in Providence, should make you rich, He will fit you to speak to those ignorant and wicked rich who so much abound in this city—and so often are the cause of its worst sin. And if the Lord is pleased to let you be very poor, you can go down and talk to those wicked and ignorant poor people, who so often are the cause of sin in this city, and so greatly need the Gospel. The winds of Providence will take you where you can fish for men. The wheels of Providence are full of eyes and all those eyes will look this way to help us to be winners of souls. You will often be surprised to find how God has been in a house that you visit—before you get there, His hands have been at work in its chambers. When you wish to speak to some particular individual, God's Providence has been dealing with that individual to make him ready for just that Word of God which you will say, but which nobody else but you could say. Oh! follow Christ and you will find that He will, by every experience through which you are passing, make you fishers of men!

Further than that, if you will follow Him, He will make you fishers of

men by *distinct monitions in your own heart*. There are many monitions from God's Spirit which are not noticed by Christians when they are in a callous condition. But when the heart is right with God and living in communion with God, we feel a sacred sensitiveness so that we do not need the Lord to shout, but His faintest whisper is heard. No, He need not even whisper. "You shall guide me with Your eyes." Oh, how many mulish Christians there are who must be held in with bit and bridle and receive a cut of the whip every now and then! But the Christian who follows his Lord shall be tenderly guided. I do not say that the Spirit of God will say to you, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," or that you will *hear* a word in your ears—but yet in your *soul*, as distinctly as the Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," you shall hear the Lord's will. As soon as you see an individual, the thought shall cross your mind, "Go and speak to that person." Every opportunity of usefulness shall be a call to you. If you are ready, the door shall open before you and you shall hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk you in it." If you have the grace to run in the right way, you shall never be long without an intimation as to what the right way is. That right way shall lead you to river or sea, where you can cast your net and be a fisher of men.

Then, too, I believe that the Lord meant by this that *He would give His followers the Holy Spirit*. They were to follow Him and then, when they had seen Him ascend into the Holy Place of the Most High, they were to tarry at Jerusalem for a little while and the Spirit would come upon them and clothe them with a mysterious power. This Word was spoken to Peter and Andrew and you know how it was fulfilled to Peter. What a host of fish he brought to land the first time he cast the net in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Brethren, we have no conception of what God could do by this company of believers gathered in the Tabernacle tonight. If now we were to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are enough of us to evangelise London! There are enough here to be the means of the salvation of the world. God saves not by many nor by few. Let us seek a benediction and if we seek it, let us hear this directing voice, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." You men and women that sit before me, you are by the shore of a great sea of human life swarming with the souls of men. You live in the midst of millions, and if you will follow Jesus and be faithful to Him, and true to Him and do what He bids you, He will make you fishers of men. Do not ask, "Who shall save this city?" The weakest shall be strong enough. Gideon's barley cake shall smite the tent and make it fall down. Samson, with the jawbone taken up from the earth, where it was lying bleaching in the sun, shall smite the Philistines. Fear not, neither be dismayed. Let your responsibilities drive you closer to your Master. Let horror of prevailing sin make you look into His

dear face who long ago wept over Jerusalem and now weeps over London. Clasp Him and never let go! By the strong and mighty impulses of the Divine life within you, quickened and brought to maturity by the Spirit of God, learn this lesson from your Lord's own mouth—"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." You are not fit for it, but He will make you fit! You cannot do it by yourselves, but He will make you do it. You do not know how to spread nets and draw shoals of fish to shore, but He will teach you. Only follow Him, and He will make you fishers of men.

I wish that I could somehow say this as with a voice of thunder, that the whole Church of God might hear it. I wish I could write it in stars across the sky, "Jesus says, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." If you forget the precept, the promise shall never be yours. If you follow some other track, or imitate some other leader, you shall fish in vain. God grant us to believe fully that Jesus can do great things *in* us and then do great things *by* us for the good of our fellows!

III. The last point you might work out in full, for yourselves, in your private meditations with much profit. We have here A FIGURE FULL OF INSTRUCTION. I will give you but two or three thoughts which you can use. "I will make you *fishers of men*." You have been fishers *of fish*—if you follow Me, I will make you fishers of *men*.

A fisher is a person who is *very dependent and needs to be trustful*. He cannot see the fish. One who fishes in the sea must go and cast in a net, as it were, at an uncertainty. Fishing is an act of faith. I have often seen, in the Mediterranean, men go with their boats and enclose *acres* of sea with vast nets and yet, when they have drawn the net to shore, they have not had as much result as I could put in my hand! A few wretched silvery nothings have made up the whole take. Yet they have gone again and cast the great net several times a day, hopefully expecting something to come of it.

Nobody is so dependent upon God as the minister of God. Oh! this fishing from the Tabernacle pulpit! What a work of faith! I cannot tell that a soul will be brought to God by it. I cannot judge whether my sermon will be suitable to the persons who are here, except that I do believe that God will guide me in the casting of the net. I expect *Him* to work salvation and I depend upon Him for it. I love this complete dependence and if *I* could be offered a certain amount of preaching power by which I could save sinners, which should be entirely at my own disposal, I would beg the Lord not to let me have it, for it is far more delightful to be entirely dependent upon Him at all times. It is good to be a fool when Christ is made wisdom unto you. It is a blessed thing to be weak if Christ becomes more fully your strength. Go to work, you who would be fishers of men and yet feel your insufficiency. You that have *no strength*, attempt this Divine work. Your Master's strength will

be seen when your own has all gone. A fisherman is a dependent person, he must look up for success every time he puts the net down, but still he is a trustful person and, therefore, he casts in the net joyfully.

A fisherman who gets his living by it is *a diligent and persevering man*. The fishers are up at dawn. At daybreak our fishermen off the Dogger Bank are fishing and they continue fishing till late in the afternoon. As long as hands can work, men will fish. May the Lord Jesus make us hard-working, persevering, unwearied fishers of men! “In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hands, for you know not what shall prosper, either this or that.”

The fisherman, in his own craft, is *intelligent and watchful*. It looks very easy, I dare say, to be a fisherman, but you would find that it was no child’s play if you were to take a real part in it. There is an art in it, from the mending of the net right on to the pulling it to shore. How diligent the fisherman is to prevent the fish leaping out of the net. I heard a great noise one night in the sea, as if some huge drum were being beaten by a giant. I looked out and I saw that the fishermen of Mentone were beating the water to drive the fish into the net, or to keep them from leaping out when they had once encompassed them with it. Ah, yes, and you and I will often have to be watching the corners of the Gospel net lest sinners who are almost caught should make their escape. They are very crafty, these fish, and they use this craftiness in endeavouring to avoid salvation. We shall have to be always at our business and to exercise all our wits—and *more* than our own wits if we are to be successful fishers of men!

The fisherman is *a very laborious person*. It is not at all an easy calling. He does not sit in an armchair and catch fish. He has to go out in rough weathers. If he that regards the clouds will not sow, I am sure that he that regards the clouds will never fish. If we never do any work for Christ except when we feel up to the mark, we shall not do much. If we feel that we will not pray because we cannot pray, we shall never pray. And if we say, “I will not preach today because I do not feel that I could preach,” we shall never preach any preaching that is worth the preaching. We must always be at it until we wear ourselves out, throwing our whole soul into the work, for Christ’s sake, in all weather.

The fisherman is *a daring man*. He tempts the boisterous sea. A little brine in his face does not hurt him. He has been wet through and through a thousand times—it is nothing to him. He never expected, when he became a deep-sea fisherman, that he was going to sleep in the lap of ease. So the true minister of Christ who fishes for souls will never mind a little risk. He will be bound to do or say many a thing that is very unpopular—and some Christian people may even judge his utterances to be too severe. He must do and say that which is for the good of souls. It is not his to entertain a question

as to what others will think of his doctrine, or of him—but in the name of the Almighty God he must feel, “If the sea roars and the fullness thereof, still, at my Master’s command, I will let down the net.”

Now, in the last place, the man whom Christ makes a fisher of men *is successful*. “But,” says one, “I have always heard that Christ’s ministers are to be *faithful*, but that they cannot be sure of being *successful*.” Yes, I have heard that saying and, one way I know it is true, but another way I have my doubts about it. He that is faithful is, in God’s way and in God’s judgment, successful, more or less. For instance, here is a brother who says that he is faithful. Of course, I must believe him, yet I never heard of a sinner being saved under him. Indeed, I would think that the safest place for a person to be in, if he did not want to be saved, would be under this gentleman’s ministry because he does not preach anything that is likely to awaken, impress, or convict anybody. This brother is “faithful,” so he says.

Well, if any person in the world said to you, “I am a fisherman, but I have never caught anything,” you would wonder how he could be called a fisherman, wouldn’t you? A farmer who never grew any wheat, or any other crop—is he a farmer? When Jesus Christ says, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men,” He means that you shall *really catch men*—that you *shall really save some*, for he that never did get any fish is not a fisherman. He that never saved a sinner after years of work is not a minister of Christ. If the result of his lifework is zero, he made a mistake when he undertook it. Go with the fire of God in your hands and fling it among the stubble, and the stubble will burn. You can be sure of that! Go and scatter the good seed—it may not all fall in fruitful places, but some of it will. You can be sure of that! Do but shine and some eyes or other will be lightened! You must, you *shall* succeed. But remember, this is the Lord’s word—“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Keep close to Jesus and do as Jesus did, in His Holy Spirit, and He will make you fishers of men.

Perhaps I speak to an attentive hearer who is not converted at all. Friend, I have the same thing to say to you. You, also, may follow Christ and then He can use you, even you. I do not know but that He has brought you to this place that you may be saved and that in later years He may make you speak for His name and Glory. Remember how He called Saul of Tarsus and made him the Apostle of the Gentiles? Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers and saved sinners make the ablest preachers. Oh, that you would run away from your old master, tonight, without giving him a minute’s notice, for if you give him any notice, he will hold you. Hasten to Jesus and say, “Here is a poor runaway slave! My Lord, I bear the fetters still upon my wrists. Will You set me free and make me Your own?” Remember, it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Never runaway slave came to Christ in the middle of the night without His taking him in and

He never gave one up to his old master! If Jesus make you free, you shall be free, indeed! Flee away to Jesus, then, right now! May His good Spirit help you and He will, by-and-by, make you a winner of others to His praise. God bless you. Amen.