

THE SOUL-WINNER;

OR,

HOW TO LEAD SINNERS TO THE SAVIOUR.

BY C. H. SPURGEON

“The salvation of one soul is worth more than the framing of a
Magna Charta of a thousand worlds.”—*Keble*.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

This volume is issued in accordance with a plan formed by Mr. Spurgeon; indeed, he had already prepared for the press the greater part of the material here published, and the rest of his manuscripts have been inserted after only slight revision. It was his intention to deliver to the students of the Pastors' College a short course of Lectures upon what he termed "that most royal employment"—Soul-Winning,—and, having completed the series, he purposed to collect his previous utterances to other audiences upon the same theme, and to publish the whole for the guidance of all who desired to become soul-winners, and with the hope also of inducing many more professing Christians to engage in this truly blessed service for the Saviour.

This explanation will account for the form in which the topic is treated in the present book. The first six chapters contain the College Lectures; then follow four Addresses delivered to Sunday-school teachers, open-air preachers, and friends gathered at Monday evening prayer-meetings at the Tabernacle; while the rest of the volume consists of Sermons in which the work of winning souls is earnestly commended to the attention of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For more than forty years, Mr. Spurgeon was, by his preaching and writing, one of the greatest soul-winners; and by his printed words still continues to be the means of the conversion of many all over the world. It is believed, therefore, that thousands will rejoice to read what he spoke and wrote concerning what he called "the chief business of the Christian minister."

THE SOUL-WINNER'S REWARD.

On my way to this meeting I observed upon the notice-board of the police station a striking placard, offering a large

REWARD

to anyone who can discover and bring to justice the perpetrators of a great crime. No doubt our legislators know that the hope of a huge reward is the only motive which will have power with the comrades of assassins. The common informer earns so much scorn and hate that few can be induced to stand in his place, even when piles of gold are offered. It is a poor business at best.

It is far more pleasant to remember that there is a reward for bringing men to mercy, and that it is of a higher order than the premium for bringing men to justice; it is, moreover, much more within our reach, and that is a practical point worthy of our notice. We cannot all hunt down criminals, but we may all rescue the perishing. God be thanked that assassins and burglars are comparatively few, but sinners who need to be sought and saved swarm around us in every place. Here is scope for you all; and none need think himself shut out from the rewards which love bestows on all who do her service.

At the mention of the word REWARD, some will prick up their ears, and mutter "legality." Yet the reward we speak of is not of debt, but of grace; and it is enjoyed, not with the proud conceit of merit, but with the grateful delight of humility.

Other friends will whisper, "Is not this a low and mercenary motive?" We reply that it is as mercenary as the spirit of Moses, who "had respect unto the recompense of the reward." In this matter, all depends upon what the reward is; and if that happens to be the joy of doing good, the comfort of having glorified God, and the bliss of pleasing the Lord Jesus—then the aspiration to be allowed to endeavour to save our fellow-men from going down into the pit is in itself a grace from the Lord; and if we did not succeed in it, yet the Lord would say of it, as He did of David's intent to build a temple, "It was well that it was in thine heart." Even if the souls we seek should all persist in unbelief, if they all despise and reject and ridicule us, yet still it will be a divine work to have at least made the attempt. If there comes no rain out of the cloud, yet it has screened off the fierce heat of the sun; all is not lost even if the greater design be not accomplished. What if we only learn how to join the Saviour in His tears, and cry, "How often would I have gathered you, but ye would not!" It is sublimity itself to be allowed to stand on the same platform with Jesus, and weep with him. *We* are the better for such sorrows, if no others are.

But, thank God, our labours are not in vain in the Lord. I believe that the

most of you, who have really tried, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by Scriptural teaching and by prayer, to bring others to Jesus, have been successful. I may be speaking to a few who have not succeeded; if so, I would recommend them to look steadily over their motive, their spirit, their work, and their prayer, and then begin again. Perhaps they may get to work more wisely, more believingly, more humbly, and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. They must act as farmers do who, after a poor harvest, plough again in hope. They ought not to be dispirited, but they ought to be aroused. We should be anxious to find out the reason of failure, if there be any, and we should be ready to learn from all our fellow-labourers; but we must steadfastly set our faces, if by any means we may save some, resolving that whatever happens we will leave no stone unturned to effect the salvation of those around us. How can we bear to go out of the world without sheaves to bear with us rejoicingly? I believe that the most of us who are now assembled to pray have been successful beyond our expectations. God has blessed us, not beyond our desires, but yet beyond our hopes.

I have often been surprised at the mercy of God to myself. Poor sermons of mine, that I could cry over when I get home, have led scores to the cross; and, more wonderful still, words that I have spoken in ordinary conversation, mere chance sentences, as men call them, have nevertheless been as winged arrows from God, and have pierced men's hearts, and laid them wounded at Jesus' feet. I have often lifted up my hands in astonishment, and said, "How can God bless such a feeble instrumentality?" This is the feeling of most who addict themselves to the blessed craft of fishing for men, and the desire of such success furnishes as pure a motive as could move an angel's heart, as pure, indeed, as that which swayed the Saviour when, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" said Satan. If he could have answered the question in the affirmative, if it could have been proved that the perfect and upright man found no reward in his holy living, then Satan would have cavilled at the justice of God, and urged men to renounce a service so unprofitable. Verily there is a reward to the righteous, and in the lofty pursuits of grace there are recompenses of infinite value. When we endeavour to lead men to God, we pursue a business far more profitable than the pearl-fisher's diving or the diamond-hunter's searching. No pursuit of mortal men is to be compared with that of soul-winning. I know what I say when I bid you think of it as men think of entering the cabinet of the nation, or occupying a throne; it is a royal business, and they are true kings who follow it successfully.

The harvest of godly service is not yet: "we do with patience wait for it;" but we have earnestings of our wage, refreshing pledges of that which is laid up in heaven for us. Partly, this reward lies in the work itself. Men go hunting and shooting for mere love of the sport; surely, in an infinitely higher sphere, we may hunt for men's souls for the pleasing indulgence of our benevolence. To some of us, it would be an unendurable misery to see men sink to hell, and to

be making no effort for their salvation. It is a reward to us to have a vent for our inward fires. It is woe and weariness to us to be shut up from those sacred activities which aim at plucking fire-brands from the flame. We are in deep sympathy with our fellows, and feel that, in a measure, their sin is our sin, their peril our peril.

If another lose the way,
My feet also go astray;
If another downward go,
In my heart is also woe.

It is therefore a relief to set forth the gospel, that we may save ourselves from that sympathetic misery which echoes in our hearts the crash of soul-ruin.

Soul-winning *is a service which brings great benefit to the individual who consecrates himself to it*. The man who has watched for a soul, prayed for it, laid his plans for it, spoken with much trembling, and endeavoured to make an impression, has been educating himself by the effort. Having been disappointed, he has cried to God more earnestly, has tried again, has looked up the promise to meet the case of the convicted one, has turned to that point of the divine character which seems most likely to encourage trembling-faith—he has in every step been benefiting himself. When he has gone over the old, old story of the cross to the weeping penitent, and has at last gripped the hand of one who could say: “I do believe, I will believe, that Jesus died for me”; I say, he has had a reward in the process through which his own mind has gone.

It has reminded him of his own lost estate; it has shown him the struggles that the Spirit had in bringing him to repentance; it has reminded him of that precious moment when he first looked to Jesus; and it has strengthened him in his firm confidence that Christ will save men. When we see Jesus save another, and see that marvellous transfiguration which passes over the face of the saved one, our own faith is greatly confirmed. Sceptics and modern-thought men have little to do with converts: those who labour for conversions believe in conversions; those who behold the processes of regeneration see a miracle wrought, and are certain that “this is the finger of God.” It is the most blessed exercise for a soul, it is the divinest ennobling of the heart, to spend yourself in seeking to bring another to the dear Redeemer’s feet. If it ended there, you might thank God that ever He called you to a service so comforting, so strengthening, so elevating, so confirming, as that of converting others from their evil ways.

Another precious recompense is found in *the gratitude and affection of those you bring to Christ*. This is a choice boon—the blessedness of joying in another’s joy, the bliss of hearing that you have led a soul to Jesus. Measure the sweetness of this recompense by the bitterness of its opposite. Men of God have brought many to Jesus, and all things have gone well in the church till declining

years or change of fashions have thrown the good man into the shade, and then the minister's own spiritual children have been eager to turn him out of doors. The unkindest cut of all has come from those who owed their souls to him. His heart was broken while he has sighed, "I could have borne it, had not the persons that I brought to the Saviour have turned against me." The pang is not unknown to me. I can never forget a certain household, in which the Lord gave me the great joy to bring four employers and several persons engaged by them to Jesus' feet. Snatched from the utmost carelessness of worldliness, these who had previously known nothing of the grace of God were joyful confessors of the faith. After a while, they imbibed certain opinions differing from ours, and from that moment some of them had nothing but hard words for me and my preaching. I had done my best to teach them all the truth I knew, and if they had found out more than I had discovered, they might at least have remembered where they learned the elements of the faith. It is years ago now, and I have never said as much as this before; but I feel the wound much. I only mention these sharp pricks to show how very sweet it is to have those about you whom you have brought to the Saviour.

A mother feels great delight in her children, for an intense love comes with natural relationships; but there is a still deeper love connected with spiritual kinship, a love which lasts through life, and will continue in eternity, for even in heaven each servant of the Lord shall say, "Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me." They neither marry nor are given in marriage in the city of our God, but fatherhood and brotherhood in Christ shall still survive. Those sweet and blessed bonds which grace has formed continue for ever, and spiritual relationships are rather developed than dissolved by translation to the better land. If you are eager for real joy, such as you may think over and sleep upon, I am persuaded that no joy of growing wealthy, no joy of increasing knowledge, no joy of influence over your fellow-creatures, no joy of any other sort, can ever be compared with the rapture of saving a soul from death, and helping to restore our lost brethren to our great Father's house. Talk of ten thousand pounds reward! It is nothing at all, one might easily spend that amount; but one cannot exhaust the unutterable delights which come from the gratitude of souls converted from the error of their ways.

But the richest reward lies in *pleasing God, and causing the Redeemer to see of the travail of His soul*. That Jesus should have His reward, is worthy of the Eternal Father; but it is marvellous that we should be employed by the Father to give to Christ the purchase of His agonies. This is a wonder of wonders! O my soul, this is an honour too great for thee! A bliss too deep for words! Listen, dear friends, and answer me. What would you give to cause a thrill of pleasure in the heart of the Well-beloved? Recollect the grief you cost Him, and the pangs that shot through Him that He might deliver you from your sin and its consequences; do you not long to make Him glad? When you bring others to His feet,

you give him joy, and no small joy either. Is not that a wonderful text: “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth?” What does that mean? Does it mean that the angels have joy? We generally read it so, but it is not the intent of the verse. It says, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God”—that is, joy in the heart of God, around whose throne the angels stand. It is a joy which angels delight to behold,—what is it? Is the blessed God capable of greater joy than His own boundless happiness? Wondrous language this! The infinite bliss of God is more eminently displayed, if it cannot be increased. Can we be the instruments of this? Can we do anything which will make the Ever-blessed glad? Yes, for we are told that the great Father rejoices above measure when His prodigal son that was dead is alive again, and the lost one is found.

If I could say this as I ought to say it, it would make every Christian cry out, “Then I will labour to bring souls to the Saviour;” and it would make those of us who have brought many to Jesus instant, in season and out of season, to bring more to Him. It is a great pleasure to be doing a kindness to an earthly friend, but to be doing something distinctly for Jesus, something which will be of all things in the world most pleasing to Him, is a great delight! It is a good work to build a meeting house, and give it outright to the cause of God, if it is done with a right and proper motive; but one living stone, built upon the sure foundation by our instrumentality, will give the Master more pleasure than if we erected a vast pile of natural stones, which might only cumber the ground. Then go, dear friends, and seek to bring your children and your neighbours, your friends and your kinsfolk, to the Saviour’s feet, for nothing will give him so much pleasure as to see them turn unto Him and live. By your love to Jesus, I beseech you, become fishers of men.