

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."

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SOUL-WINNING—GODWARD.

Our main business, brethren, is to win souls. Like the shoeing-smiths, we need to know a great many things; but, just as the smith *must* know about horses, and how to make shoes for them, so we *must* know about souls, and how to win them for God. The part of the subject on which I shall speak to you this afternoon is—

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SOUL-WINNING.

keeping myself to one set of those qualifications, namely, the Godward ones, and I shall try to treat the subject in somewhat of a common-sense style, asking you to judge for yourselves what those qualifications would be, which God would naturally look for in His servants, what qualifications He would be likely to approve, and most likely to use. You must know that every workman, if he be wise, uses a tool that is likely to accomplish the purpose he has in view. There are some artists who have never been able to play except upon their own violin, nor to paint except with their own favourite brush and palette; and certainly, the great God, the mightiest of all the workers, in His great artistic work of soul-winning, loves to have His own special tools. In the old creation, He used none but His own instruments, “He spake, and it was done;” and in the new creation, the efficient agent is still His powerful Word. He speaks through the ministry of His servants, and therefore they must be fit trumpets for Him to speak through, fit instruments for Him to use for conveying His Word to the ears and hearts of men. Judge ye, then, my brethren, whether God will use you; imagine yourselves in His place, and think what kind of men those would be whom you would be most likely to use if you were in the position of the Most High God.

I am sure you would say, first of all, that *a man who is to be a soul-winner must have holiness of character*. Ah! how few who attempt to preach think sufficiently of this! If they did, it would strike them at once that the Eternal would never use dirty tools, that the thrice-holy Jehovah would only select holy instruments for the accomplishment of His work. No wise man would pour his wine into foul bottles; no kind and good parent would allow his children to go to see an immoral play; and God will not go to work with instruments which would compromise His own character. Suppose it were well known that, if men were only clever, God would use them, whatever their character and conduct might be; suppose it were understood that you could get on as well in the work of God by chicanery and untruthfulness as by honesty and uprightness, what man in the world, with any right feeling, would not be ashamed of such a state of affairs? But, brethren, it is not so. There are many in the present day who tell us that the theatre is a great school for morals. That must be a strange school where the

teachers never learn their own lessons. In God's school, the teachers must be masters of the art of holiness. If we teach one thing by our lips and another by our lives, those who listen to us will say, "Physician, heal thyself." "Thou sayest, 'Repent.' Where is thine own repentance? Thou sayest, 'Serve God, and be obedient to His will.' Do you serve Him? Are you obedient to His will?" An unholy ministry would be the derision of the world, and a dishonour to God. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." He will speak through a fool if he be but a holy man. I do not, of course, mean that God chooses fools to be His ministers; but let a man once become really holy, even though he has but the slenderest possible ability, he will be a more fit instrument in God's hand than the man of gigantic acquirements, who is not obedient to the divine will, nor clean and pure in the sight of the Lord God Almighty.

Dear brethren, I do beg you to attach the highest importance to your own personal holiness. Do live unto God. If you do not, your Lord will not be with you; He will say of you as He said of the false prophets of old, "I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." You may preach very fine sermons, but if you are not yourselves holy, there will be no souls saved. The probability is that you will not come to the conclusion that your want of holiness is the reason for your non-success; you will blame the people, you will blame the age in which you live, you will blame anything except yourself; but there will be the root of the whole mischief. Do I not myself know men of considerable ability and industry, who go on year after year without any increase in their churches? The reason is that they are not living before God as they ought to live. Sometimes the evil is in the family of the minister; his sons and daughters are rebels against God, bad language is allowed even amongst his own children, and his reproofs are simply like Eli's mild question to his wicked sons, "Why do ye such things?" Sometimes, the minister is worldly, greedy after gain, neglectful of his work. That is not according to God's mind, and He will not bless such a man. When I listened to Mr. George Müller, as he was preaching at Mentone, it was just such an address as might be given to a Sunday-school by an ordinary teacher, yet I never heard a sermon that did me more good, and more richly profited my soul. It was George Müller in it that made it so useful. There was no George Müller in it in one sense; for he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord; he was only there in his personality as a witness to the truth, but he bore that witness in such a manner that you could not help saying, "That man not only preaches what he believes, but also what he lives." In every word he uttered his glorious life of faith seemed to fall upon both ear and heart. I was delighted to sit and listen to him; yet, as for novelty or strength of thought, there was not a trace of it in the whole discourse. Holiness was the preacher's force; and you may depend upon it that, if God is to bless us, our strength must lie in the same direction.

This holiness ought to show itself in communion with God. If a man delivers

his own message, it will have such power as his own character gives to it; but if he delivers his Master's message, having heard it from his Master's lips, that will be quite another thing; and if he can acquire something of the Master's spirit as He looked upon him, and gave him the message, if he can reproduce the expression of his Master's face, and the tone of his Master's voice, that also will be quite another thing. Read McCheyne's Memoir, read the whole of it, I cannot do you a better service than by recommending you to read it; there is no great freshness of thought, there is nothing very novel or striking in it, but as you read it, you must get good out of it, for you are conscious that it is the story of the life of a man who walked with God. Moody would never have spoken with the force he did if he had not lived a life of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. The greatest force of the sermon lies in what has gone before the sermon. You must get ready for the whole service by private fellowship with God, and real holiness of character.

You will all confess that, if a man is to be used as a winner of souls, he must have *spiritual life to a high degree*. You see, brethren, our work is, under God, to communicate life to others. It would be well to imitate Elisha when he stretched himself upon the dead child, and brought him back to life. The prophet's staff was not sufficient, because it had no life in it: the life must be communicated by a living instrument, and the man who is to communicate the life must have a great deal of it himself. You remember the words of Christ, "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," that is, the Holy Spirit, when He dwells within a living child of God, afterwards rises out of the very midst of him as a fountain or a river, so that others may come and participate in the Spirit's gracious influences. I do not think there is one of you who would wish to be a dead minister. God will not use dead tools for working living miracles; He must have living men, and men that are all alive. There are many who are alive, but they are not altogether alive. I remember once seeing a painting of the resurrection, which was one of the queerest pictures I ever saw. The artist had attempted to depict the moment when the work was only half done: there were some who were alive down as far as their waists, some had one arm alive, some had part of their heads alive. The thing is quite possible in our day. There are some men who are only about half alive; they have a living jaw, but not a living heart; others have a living heart, but not a living brain; others have a living eye, they can see things pretty plainly, but their hearts are not alive, they can give good descriptions of what they see, but there is no warmth of love in them. There are some ministers who are one-half angel, and the other half—well, let us say, maggots. It is an awful contrast; but there are many instances of it. Are there any such here? They preach well, and you say, as you listen to one of them, "That is a good man." You feel that he is a good man; you hear that he is going to such-and-such a person's house to supper, and you think that you will go in to supper there, too, that you may

hear what gracious words will fall from his lips; and as you watch, out they come—maggots! It was an angel in the pulpit; now come the worms! It is so, often, but it ought never to be so; if we want to be true witnesses for God, we must be all angel and no worms. God deliver us from this state of semi-death! May we be all alive from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot! I know some such ministers; you cannot come into contact with them without feeling the power of the spiritual life which is in them. It is not merely while they are talking upon religious topics, but even in the commonplace things of the world, you are conscious that there is something about the men which tells you that they are all alive unto God. Such men will be used by God for the quickening of others.

Suppose it were possible for you to be exalted into the place of God, do you not think, next, that you would employ a man who thought little of himself, *a man of humble spirit*? If you saw a very proud man, would you be likely to use him as your servant? Certainly, the great God has a predilection for those who are humble. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” He loaths the proud; and whenever He sees the high and mighty, He passes them by; but whenever He finds the lowly in heart, He takes pleasure in exalting them. He delights especially in humility amongst His ministers. It is an awful sight to see a proud minister. There are few things that can give the devil more joy than this, whenever he takes his walks abroad. Here is something that delights him, and he says to himself, “Here are all the preparations for a great fall before long.” Some ministers show their pride by their style in the pulpit; you can never forget the way in which they announced their text; “It is *I*: be not afraid.” Others manifest it in their attire, in the silly vanity of their dress; or else in their common talk, in which they continually magnify the deficiencies of others, and dilate on their own extraordinary excellences. There are two sorts of proud people, and it is difficult sometimes to say which of the two is the worse. There is, first of all, the kind that is full of that vanity which talks about itself, and invites other people to talk about it, too, and to pat it on the back, and stroke its feathers the right way. It is all full of its little morsel of a self, and goes strutting about, and saying, “Praise me, please, praise me, I want it,” like a little child who goes to each one in the room, and says, “See my new dress; isn’t it a beauty?” You may have seen some of these pretty dears; I have met many of them. The other kind of pride is too big for that sort of thing. It does not care for it; it despises people so much that it does not condescend to wish for their praises. It is so supremely satisfied with itself that it does not stoop to consider what others think of it. I have sometimes thought it is the more dangerous kind of pride spiritually, but it is much the more respectable of the two. There is, after all, something very noble in being too proud to be proud. Suppose

those great donkeys did bray at you, do not be such a donkey as to notice them. But this other poor little soul says, "Well, everybody's praise is worth something," and so he baits his mousetraps, and tries to catch little mice of praise, that he may cook them for his breakfast. He has a mighty appetite for such things. Brethren, get rid of both kinds of pride if you have anything of either of them about you. The dwarf pride and the ogre pride are both of them abominations in the sight of the Lord. Never forget that you are disciples of Him who said, "Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Humility is not having a mean opinion of yourself. If a man has a low opinion of himself, it is very possible that he is correct in his estimate. I have known some people, whose opinion of themselves, according to what they have said, was very low indeed. They thought so little of their own powers that they never ventured to try to do any good; they said they had no self-reliance. I have known some so wonderfully humble that they have always liked to pick an easy place for themselves; they were too humble to do anything that would bring any blame upon them; they called it humility, but I thought "sinful love of ease" would have been a better name for their conduct. True humility will lead you to think rightly about yourselves, to think the truth about yourselves.

In the matter of soul-winning, humility makes you feel that you are nothing and nobody, and that, if God gives you success in the work, you will be driven to ascribe to Him all the glory, for none of the credit of it could properly belong to you. If you do not have success, humility will lead you to blame your own folly and weakness, not God's sovereignty. Why should God give blessing, and then let you run away with the glory of it? The glory of the salvation of souls belongs to Him, and to Him alone. Then why should you try to steal it? You know how many attempt this theft. "When I was preaching at such-and-such a place, fifteen persons came into the vestry at the close of the service, and thanked me for the sermon I had preached." You and your blessed sermon be hanged,—I might have used a stronger word if I had liked, for really you are worthy of condemnation whenever you take to yourself the honour which belongeth unto God only. You remember the story of the young prince, who came into the room where he thought his dying father was sleeping, and put the king's crown on his head to see how it would fit him. The king, who was watching him, said, "Wait a little while, my son, wait till I am dead." So, when you feel any inclination to put the crown of glory on your head, just fancy that you hear God saying to you, "Wait till I am dead, before you try on My crown." As that will never be, you had better leave the crown alone, and let Him wear it to whom it rightfully belongs. Our song must ever be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake."

Some men who have not had humility, have been sent adrift from the ministry, for the Lord will not use those who will not ascribe the honour entirely to Himself. Humility is one of the chief qualifications for usefulness; many have

passed away from the roll of useful men because they have been lifted up with pride, and so have fallen into the snare of the devil. Perhaps you feel that, as you are only poor students, there is no fear of your falling into this sin; but it is quite possible that with some of you there is all the more danger, for this very reason, if God should bless you, and put you in a prominent position. A man who is brought up in a good circle of society all his life, does not feel the change so much when he reaches a position which to others would be a great elevation. I always feel that, in the case of certain men whom I could name, a great mistake was made. As soon as they were converted, they were taken right out of their former associations, and put before the public as popular preachers. It was a great pity that many made little kings of them, and so prepared the way for their fall, for they could not bear the sudden change. It would have been a good thing for them, if everybody had pitched into them, and abused them, for ten or twenty years; for it would have probably saved them from much after-misery. I am always very grateful for the rough treatment I received in my earlier days from all sorts of people. The moment I ever did any good thing at all, they were at me like a pack of hounds. I had not time to sit down and boast what I had done, for they were raving and roaring at me continually. If I had been picked up all of a sudden, and placed where I am now, the probability is that I should have gone down again just as quickly. When you go out of the College, it will be well for you if you are treated as I was. If you have great success, it will turn your head if God does not permit you to be afflicted in some way or other. If you are ever tempted to say, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" just remember Nebuchadnezzar, when he was "driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." God has many ways of fetching proud Nebuchadnezzars down, and He can very easily humble you too, if you are ever lifted up with conceit. This point of the need of deep humility in a soul-winner does not need any proof; everyone can see, with half an eye, that God is not likely to bless any man much unless he is truly humble.

The next essential qualification for success in the work of the Lord, and it is a vital one, is *faith*. You know, brethren, how the Lord Jesus Christ could not do many mighty works in his own country because of the unbelief of the people; and it is equally true that with some men, God can not do many mighty works because of *their* unbelief. If ye will not believe, neither shall ye be used of God. "According to your faith be it unto you," is one of the unalterable laws of His kingdom. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you;" but if the question has to be put, "Where is your faith?" the mountains will not move for you, nor will even a poor sycamore tree be stirred from its place.

You must have faith, brethren, about your call to the ministry; you must

believe without question that you are really chosen of God to be ministers of the gospel of Christ. If you firmly believe that God has called you to preach the gospel, you will preach it with courage and confidence; and you will feel that you are going to your work because you have a right to do it. If you have an idea that possibly you are nothing but an interloper, you will do nothing of any account; you will be only a poor, limping, diffident, half-apologetic preacher, for whose message no one will care. You had better not begin to preach until you are quite sure that God has called you to the work. A man once wrote to ask me whether he should preach or not. When I do not know what reply to send to anyone, I always try to give as wise an answer as I possibly can. Accordingly, I wrote to this man, "Dear Friend—If the Lord has opened your mouth, the devil cannot shut it; but if the devil has opened it, may the Lord shut it up!" Six months afterwards, I met the man, and he thanked me for my letter, which, he said, greatly encouraged him to go on preaching. I said, "How was that?" He replied, "You said, 'If the Lord has opened your mouth, the devil cannot shut it.'" I said, "Yes, I did so; but I also put the other side of the question." "Oh!" said he, at once, "that part did not relate to me." We can always have oracles to suit our own ideas if we know how to interpret them. If you have genuine faith in your call to the ministry, you will be ready, with Luther, to preach the gospel even while standing within the jaws of the leviathan, between his great teeth.

You must also believe that the message you have to deliver is God's Word. I had sooner that you believed half-a-dozen truths intensely than a hundred only feebly. If your hand is not large enough to hold a great deal, hold firmly what you can; because, if it came to a regular push and shove, and we all of us were allowed to carry away as much gold as we could take from a heap, it might not be much use to have a very big purse, but he would come off best in the scuffle who should close his hand tightly on as much as he could conveniently hold, and not let it go. We may sometimes do well to imitate the boy mentioned in the ancient fable. When he put his hand into a narrow-necked jar, and grasped as many nuts as he could hold, he could not get even one of them out; but when he let half of them go, the rest came out with ease. So must we do; we cannot hold everything, it is impossible, our hand is not big enough; but when we do get anything in it, let us hold it fast, and grip it tightly. Believe what you do believe, or else you will never persuade anybody else to believe it. If you adopt this style, "I think this is a truth, and as a young man I beg to ask your kind attention to what I am about to say; I am merely suggesting," and so on, if that is your mode of preaching, you will go to work the easiest way to breed doubters. I would rather hear you say, "Young as I am, what I have to say comes from God, and God's Word says so-and-so and so-and-so; there it is, and you must believe what God says, or you will be lost." The people who hear you will say, "That young fellow certainly believes something;" and very likely some of them will be led to believe, too. God uses the faith of His ministers to breed faith in other people.

You may depend upon it that souls are not saved by a minister who doubts; and the preaching of your doubts and your questions can never possibly decide a soul for Christ. You must have great faith in the Word of God if you are to be winners of souls to those who hear it.

You must also believe in the power of that message to save people. You may have heard the story of one of our first students, who came to me, and said, "I have been preaching now for some months, and I do not think I have had a single conversion." I said to him, "And do you expect that the Lord is going to bless you and save souls every time you open your mouth?" "No, sir," he replied. "Well, then," I said, "that is why you do not get souls saved. If you had believed, the Lord would have given the blessing." I had caught him very nicely; but many others would have answered me in just the same way as he did. They tremblingly believe that it is possible, by some strange mysterious method, that once in a hundred sermons God might win a quarter of a soul. They have hardly enough faith to keep them standing upright in their boots; how can they expect God to bless them? I like to go to the pulpit feeling, "This is God's Word that I am going to deliver in His name; it cannot return to Him void; I have asked His blessing upon it, and He is bound to give it, and His purposes will be answered, whether my message is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death to those who hear it."

Now, if this is how you feel, what will be the result if souls are not saved? Why, you will call special prayer-meetings, to seek to know why the people do not come to Christ; you will have enquirers' meetings for the anxious; you will meet the people with a joyful countenance, so that they may see that you are expecting a blessing, but, at the same time, you will let them know that you will be grievously disappointed unless the Lord gives you conversions. Yet, how is it in many places? Nobody prays much about the matter, there are no meetings for crying to God for a blessing, the minister never encourages the people to come and tell him about the work of grace in their souls; verily, verily, I say unto you, he has his reward; he gets what he asked for, he receives what he expected, his Master gives him his penny, but nothing else. The command is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" and here we sit, with closed lips, waiting for the blessing. Open your mouth, brother, with a full expectation, a firm belief, and according to your faith so shall it be unto you.

That is the essential point, you must believe in God and in His gospel if you are to be a winner of souls; some other things may be omitted, but this matter of faith must never be. It is true that God does not always measure His mercy by our unbelief, for He has to think of other people as well as of us; but, looking at the matter in a common-sense way, it does seem that the most likely instrument to do the Lord's work is the man who expects that God will use him, and who goes forth to labour in the strength of that conviction. When success comes,

he is not surprised, for he was looking for it. He sowed living seed, and he expected to reap a harvest from it; he cast his bread upon the waters, and he means to search and watch till he finds it again.

Once more, if a man is to succeed in his ministry, and win many souls, he must be characterized by *thorough earnestness*. Do we not know some men, who preach in such a lifeless manner that it is highly improbable that anybody will ever be affected by what they say? I was present when a good man asked the Lord to bless to the conversion of sinners the sermon that he was about to deliver. I do not wish to limit omnipotence, but I do not believe that God could bless to any sinner the sermon that was then preached unless He had made the hearer misunderstand what the minister said. It was one of those “bright poker sermons,” as I call them. You know that there are pokers that are kept in drawing-rooms to be looked at, but never used. If you ever tried to poke the fire with them, would not you catch it from the lady of the house? These sermons are just like those pokers, polished up, bright, and cold; they seem as if they might have some relation to the people in the fixed stars, they certainly have no connection with anyone in this world. What good could come of such discourses, no one can tell; but I feel sure there is not power enough in them to kill a cockroach, or a spider; certainly, there is no power in them to bring a dead soul to life. There are some sermons of which it is quite true that, the more you think of them, the less you think of them; and if any poor sinner goes to hear them with the hope of getting saved, you can only say that the minister is more likely to stand in the way of his going to heaven than to point him to the right road.

You may depend upon it that you may make men understand the truth if you really want to do so; but if you are not in earnest, it is not likely that they will be. If a man were to knock at my door in the middle of the night, and when I put my head out of the window to see what was the matter, he should say, in a very quiet, unconcerned way, “There is a fire at the back part of your house,” I should have very little thought of any fire, and should feel inclined to empty a jug of water over him. If I am walking along, and a man comes up to me, and says, in a cheerful tone of voice, “Good afternoon, sir, do you know that I am starving? I have not tasted food for ever so long, indeed, I have not;” I should reply, “My good fellow, you seem to take it very easy; I do not believe you want for much, or you would not be so unconcerned about it.” Some men seem to preach in this fashion:— “My dear friends, this is Sunday, so here I am; I have been spending my time in my study all the week, and now I hope you will listen to what I have to say to you. I do not know that there is anything in it that particularly concerns you, it might have some connection with the man in the moon; but I understand that some of you are in danger of going to a certain place which I do not wish to mention, only I hear that it is not a nice place for even a temporary residence. I have especially to preach to you that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, has something to do with salvation, and if you

mind what you do”—and so on—“it is possible that you will”—and so on, and so on. That is, in a nutshell, the full report of many a discourse. There is nothing in that kind of talk that can do anybody any good; and after the man has kept on in that style for three-quarters of an hour, he closes by saying, “Now it is time to go home,” and he hopes that the deacons will give him a couple of guineas for his services. Now, brethren, that sort of thing will not do. We did not come into the world to waste our own time, and other people’s, in that fashion.

I hope we were born for something better than to be mere chips in the porridge, like the man I have described. Only fancy God sending a man into the world to try to win souls, and that is the style of his mind, and the whole spirit of his life. There are some ministers who are constantly being knocked up with doing nothing; they preach two sermons, of a sort, on Sunday, and they say the effort almost wears their life out; and they go and give little pastoral visitations, which consist in drinking a cup of tea and talking small gossip; but there is no vehement agony for souls, no “Woe! woe!” on their hearts and lips, no perfect consecration, no zeal in God’s service. Well, if the Lord sweeps them away, if He cuts them down as cumberers of the ground, it will not be a matter for surprise. The Lord Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem, and you will have to weep over sinners if they are to be saved through you. Dear brethren, do be earnest, put your whole soul into the work, or else give it up.

Another qualification that is essential to soul-winning is *great simplicity of heart*. I do not know whether I can thoroughly explain what I mean by that, but I will try to make it clear by contrasting it with something else. You know some men who are too wise to be just simple believers; they know such a lot that they do not believe anything that is plain and simple. Their souls have been fed so daintily that they cannot live on anything but Chinese birds’-nest, and such luxuries. There is no milk that ever came fresh from a cow that is good enough for them, they are far too superfine to drink such a beverage as that. Everything they have must be incomparable. Now God does not bless these exquisite celestial dandies, these spiritual aristocrats. No, no; as soon as you see them, you feel ready to say, “They may do well enough as Lord So-and-So’s servants, but they are not the men to do God’s work. He is not likely to employ such grand gentlemen as they are.” When they select a text, they never explain its true meaning; but they go round about to find out something that the Holy Ghost never intended to convey by it, and when they get hold of one of their precious “new thoughts”—oh, dear! what a fuss they make over it! Here is a man who has found a stale herring! What a treat! It is so odoriferous! Now we shall hear of this stale herring for the next six months, when somebody else will find another one. What a shout they set up! “Glory! Glory! Glory! Here is a new thought!” A new book comes out about it, and all these great men go sniffing round it to prove what deep thinkers and what wonderful men they are. God does not bless that kind of wisdom.

By simplicity of heart, I mean, that a man evidently goes into the ministry for the glory of God and the winning of souls, and nothing else. There are some men who would like to win souls and glorify God if it could be done with due regard to their own interests. They would be delighted, oh, yes! certainly, very pleased indeed, to extend the kingdom of Christ, if the kingdom of Christ would give full play to their amazing powers. They would go in for soul-winning if it would induce people to take the horses out of their carriage, and drag them in triumph through the street; they must be somebody, they must be known, they must be talked about, they must hear people say, "What a splendid man that is!" Of course, they give God the glory after they have sucked the juice out of it, but they must have the orange themselves first. Well, you know, there is that sort of spirit even among ministers, and God cannot endure it. He is not going to have a man's leavings; He will have all the glory, or none at all. If a man seeks to serve himself, to get honour to himself, instead of seeking to serve God and honour Him alone, the Lord Jehovah will not use that man. A man who is to be used by God must just believe that what he is going to do is for the glory of God, and he must work from no other motive. When outsiders go to hear some preachers, all that they remember is that they were capital actors; but here is a very different kind of man. After they have heard him preach, they do not think about how he looked, or how he spoke, but about the solemn truths he uttered. Another man keeps rolling out what he has to tell in such a fashion that those who listen to him say to one another, "Do you not see that he lives by his preaching? He preaches for his living." I would rather hear it said, "That man said something in his sermon that made many of the people think less of him, he uttered most distasteful sentiments, he did nothing but drive at us with the Word of the Lord all the while that he was preaching, his one aim was to bring us to repentance and faith in Christ." That is the kind of a man whom the Lord delights to bless.

I like to see men, like some before me here, to whom I have said, "Here you are, earning a good salary, and likely to rise to a position of influence in the world; if you give up your business, and come into the College, you will very likely be a poor Baptist minister all your life;" and they have looked up, and said, "I had sooner starve and win souls than spend my life in any other calling." Most of you are that kind of men, I believe you all are. There must never be an eye to the glory of God *and* the fat sheep; it must never be God's glory *and* your own honour and esteem among men. It will not do; no, not even if you preach to please God *and* Jemima; it must be God's glory alone, nothing less and nothing else, not even Jemima. As the limpet to the rock, so is she to the minister; but it will not do for him even to think of pleasing her. With true simplicity of heart, he must seek to please God, whether men and women are pleased or not.

Lastly, there must be *a complete surrender of yourself to God*, in this sense, that from this time you wish to think, not your own thoughts, but God's

thoughts; and that you determine to preach, not anything of your own invention, but God's Word; and further, that you resolve not even to give out that truth in your own way, but in God's way. Suppose you read your sermons, which is not very likely, you desire not to write anything but what shall be entirely according to the Lord's mind. When you get hold of a fine big word, you ask yourself whether it is likely to be a spiritual blessing to your people; and if you think it would not, you leave it out. Then there is that grand bit of poetry that you could not understand, you felt that you could not omit that; but when you asked whether it was likely to be instructive to the rank and file of your people, you were obliged to reject it. You must stick those gems, that you found on a literary dust-heap, into the coronet of your discourse, if you want to show the people how industrious *you* have been; but if you desire to leave yourself entirely in God's hands, it is probable that you will be led to make some very simple statement, some trite remark, something with which everyone in the congregation is familiar. If you feel moved to put that into the sermon, put it in by all means, even if you have to leave out the big words, and the poetry, and the gems, for it may be that the Lord will bless that simple statement of the gospel to some poor sinner who is seeking the Saviour.

If you yield yourself thus unreservedly to the mind and will of God, by-and-by, when you get out into the ministry, you will sometimes be impelled to use a strange expression or to offer an odd prayer, which at the time may have a queer look even to yourself; but it will be all explained to you afterwards, when someone comes to tell you that he never understood the truth until you put it that day in such an unusual way. You will be more likely to feel this influence if you are thoroughly prepared by study and prayer for your work in the pulpit, and I urge you always to make all due preparation, and even to write out in full what you think you ought to say; but not to go and deliver it *memoriter*, like a poll parrot repeating what it has been taught, for if you do that, you will certainly not be leaving yourself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I have no doubt you will sometimes feel that there is a passage that you must put in, a fine piece by one of the British poets, or a choice extract from some classic author. I do not suppose you would like it to be known; but you did read it to a College friend. Of course, you did not ask him to praise it, because you felt sure that he could not help doing so. There was one particular piece in it that you have very seldom heard equalled; you are sure that Mr. Punshon or Dr. Parker could not have done better than that. You are quite certain that, when the people hear that sermon, they will be obliged to feel that there is something in it. It may be, however, that the Lord will consider that it is too good to be blessed, there is too much in it; it is like the host of men that were with Gideon, they were too many for the Lord, He could not give the Midianites into their hands, lest they should vaunt themselves against Him, saying, "Our own might hath gotten us the victory." When twenty-two thousand of them had been sent

away, the Lord said to Gideon, "The people are yet too many," and all of them had to be sent home except the three hundred men that lapped, and then the Lord said to Gideon, "Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand." So the Lord says about some of your sermons, "I cannot do any good with them, they are too big." There is that one with the fourteen subdivisions; leave seven of them out, and then perhaps the Lord will bless it. Some day it may happen, just when you are in the middle of your discourse, that a thought will come across your mind, and you will say to yourself, "Now, if I utter this, that old deacon will make it hot for me; and there is a gentleman just come in who keeps a school, he is a critic, and will be sure not to be pleased if I say this; and besides, there is here a remnant according to the election of grace, and the 'hyper' up in the gallery will give me one of those heavenly looks that are so full of meaning." Now, brother, feel ready to say just anything that God gives you to say, irrespective of all the consequences, and utterly regardless of what the "hypers" or the lowpers or anybody else will think or do.

One of the principal qualifications of a great artist's brush must be its yielding itself up to him so that he can do what he likes with it. A harpist will love to play on one particular harp because he knows the instrument, and the instrument almost appears to know him. So, when God puts His hand upon the very strings of your being, and every power within you seems to respond to the movements of His hand, you are an instrument that He can use. It is not easy to keep in that condition, to be in such a sensitive state that you receive the impression that the Holy Spirit desires to convey, and are influenced by Him at once. If there is a great ship out at sea, and there comes a tiny ripple on the waters, it is not moved by it in the least. Here comes a moderate wave, the vessel does not feel it, the Great Eastern sits still upon the bosom of the deep. But just look over the bulwarks; see those corks down there, if only a fly drops into the water, they feel the motion, and dance upon the tiny wave. May you be as mobile beneath the power of God as the cork is on the surface of the sea! I am sure this self-surrender is one of the essential qualifications for a preacher who is to be a winner of souls. There is something that must be said if you are to be the means of saving that man in the corner; woe unto you if you are not ready to say it, woe unto you if you are afraid to say it, woe unto you if you are ashamed to say it, woe unto you if you do not dare to say it lest somebody up in the gallery should say that you were too earnest, too enthusiastic, too zealous!

These seven things, I think, are the qualifications, Godward, which would strike the mind of any of you if you tried to put yourself into the position of the Most High, and considered what you would wish to have in those whom you employed in the winning of souls. May God give us all of these qualifications, for Christ's sake! Amen.