

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*.

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

NEW YORK — CHICAGO — TORONTO

Publishers of Evangelical Literature

COPYRIGHTED, 1895, by FLEMING H. REVELL CO.

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—MANWARD.

You remember, brethren, that on the last occasion when I gave you a lecture on soul-winning, I spoke of the qualifications, Godward, that would fit a man to be a soul-winner; and I tried to describe to you the kind of a man that the Lord was most likely to use in the winning of souls. This afternoon, I propose to take as my subject—

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOUL-WINNER, MANWARD.

I might almost mention the very same points that I enumerated before as being those which will best tell manward, for I do think that those qualities that commend themselves to the notice of God, as being most adapted to the end He desires, are also likely to be approved by the object acted upon, that is, the soul of man.

There have been many men in the world who have not been at all adapted for this work; and, first, let me say that *an ignoramus is not likely to be much of a soul-winner*. A man who only knows that he is a sinner, and that Christ is a Saviour, may be very useful to others in the same condition as himself, and it is his duty to do the best he can with what little knowledge he possesses; but, on the whole, I should not expect such a man to be very largely used in the service of God. If he had enjoyed a wider and deeper experience of the things of God, if he had been in the highest sense a learned man because taught of God, he could have used his knowledge for the good of others; but being to a great extent ignorant of the things of God himself, I do not see how he can make them known to other people. Truly, there must be some light in that candle which is to lighten men's darkness, and there must be some information in that man who is to be a teacher of his fellows. The man who is almost or altogether ignorant, whatever will he has to do good, must be left out of the race of great soul-winners; he is disqualified from even entering the lists, and therefore, let us all ask, brethren, that we may be well instructed in the truth of God, that we may be able to teach others also.

Granted that you are not of the ignorant class to which I have been referring, but supposing that you are well instructed in the best of all wisdom, what are the qualities that you must have towards men if you are to win them for the Lord? I should say, there must be about us *an evident sincerity*; not only sincerity, but such sincerity that it shall be manifest at once to anyone who honestly looks for it. It must be quite clear to your hearers that you have a firm belief in the truths that you are preaching; otherwise, you will never make them believe them. Unless they are convinced, beyond all question, that you do believe these truths yourselves, there will be no efficacy and no force in your preaching. No one must suspect you of proclaiming to others what you do not fully believe in

yourself; if it should ever be so, your work will be of no effect. All who listen to you ought to be conscious that you are exercising one of the noblest crafts, and performing one of the most sacred functions that ever fell to the lot of man. If you have only a feeble appreciation of the gospel you profess to deliver, it is impossible for those who hear your proclamation of it to be greatly influenced by it. I heard it asked, the other day, of a certain minister, "Did he preach a good sermon?" and the reply to the enquiry was, "What he said was very good." "But did you not profit by the sermon?" "No, not in the slightest degree." "Was it not a good sermon?" Again came the first answer, "What he said was very good." "What do you mean? Why did you not profit by the sermon if what the preacher said was very good?" This was the explanation that the listener gave, "I did not profit by the discourse because I did not believe in the man who delivered it; he was simply an actor performing a part; I did not believe that he felt what he preached, nor that he cared whether we felt or believed it or not."

Where such a state of things as that exists, the hearers cannot be expected to profit by the sermon, no matter what the preacher may say; they may try to fancy that the truths he utters are precious, they may resolve that they will feed upon the provision whoever may set the dish before them; but it is no use, they cannot do it, they cannot separate the heartless speaker from the message he delivers so carelessly. As soon as a man lets his work become a matter of mere form or routine, it sinks into a performance in which the preacher is simply an actor. He is only acting a part, as he might in a play at the theatre; and not speaking from his inmost soul, as a man sent from God. I do beseech you, brethren, speak from your hearts, or else do not speak at all. If you can be silent, be silent; but if you must speak for God, be thoroughly sincere about it. It would be better for you to go back to business, and weigh butter or sell reels of cotton, or do anything rather than pretend to be ministers of the gospel unless God has called you to the work. I believe that the most damnable thing a man can do is to preach the gospel merely as an actor, and to turn the worship of God into a kind of theatrical performance. Such a caricature is more worthy of the devil than of God. Divine truth is far too precious to be made the subject of such a mockery. You may depend upon it that, when the people once suspect that you are insincere, they will never listen to you except with disgust, and they will not be at all likely to believe your message if you give them cause to think that you do not believe it yourselves.

I hope I am not wrong in supposing that all of us are thoroughly sincere in our Master's service; so I will go on to what seems to be to me the next qualification, manward, for soul-winning, and that is, *evident earnestness*. The command to the man who would be a true servant of the Lord Jesus Christ is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." If a man is to be a soul-winner, there must be in him intensity of emotion as well as sincerity of heart. You may preach the

most solemn warnings, and the most dreadful threatenings, in such an indifferent or careless way that no one will be in the least affected by them; and you may repeat the most affectionate exhortations in such a half-hearted manner that no one will be moved either to love or fear. I believe, brethren, that for soul-winning there is more in this matter of earnestness than in almost anything else. I have seen and heard some who were very poor preachers, who yet brought many souls to the Saviour through the earnestness with which they delivered their message. There was positively nothing in their sermons (until the provision merchant used them to wrap round his butter), yet those feeble sermons brought many to Christ. It was not what the preachers said, so much as how they said it, that carried conviction to the hearts of their hearers. The simplest truth was so driven home by the intensity of the utterance and emotion of the man from whom it came that it told with surprising effect. If any gentleman here would present me with a cannon-ball, say one weighing fifty or a hundred pounds, and let me roll it across the room; and another would entrust me with a rifle-ball, and a rifle out of which I could fire it, I know which would be the more effective of the two. Let no man despise the little bullet, for very often that is the one that kills the sin, and kills the sinner, too. So, brethren, it is not the bigness of the words you utter; it is the force with which you deliver them that decides what is to come of the utterance. I have heard of a ship that was fired at by the cannon in a fort, but no impression was made upon it until the general in command gave the order for the balls to be made red-hot, and then the vessel was sent to the bottom of the sea in three minutes. That is what you must do with your sermons, make them red-hot; never mind if men do say you are too enthusiastic, or even too fanatical, give them red-hot shot, there is nothing else half as good for the purpose you have in view. We do not go out snow-balling on Sundays, we go fire-balling; we ought to hurl grenades into the enemy's ranks.

What earnestness our theme deserves! We have to tell of an earnest Saviour, an earnest heaven, and an earnest hell. How earnest we ought to be when we remember that in our work we have to deal with souls that are immortal, with sin that is eternal in its effects, with pardon that is infinite, and with terrors and joys that are to last for ever and ever! A man who is not in earnest when he has such a theme as this,—can he possess a heart at all? Could one be discovered even with a microscope? If he were dissected, probably all that could be found would be a pebble, a heart of stone, or some other substance equally incapable of emotion. I trust that, when God gave us hearts of flesh for ourselves, He gave us hearts that could feel for other people also.

These things being taken for granted, I should say, next, that it is necessary for a man who is to be a soul-winner, that he should have an *evident love to his hearers*. I cannot imagine a man being a winner of souls when he spends most of his time in abusing his congregation, and talking as if he hated the very sight of them. Such men seem happy only when they are emptying vials of wrath over

those who have the unhappiness of listening to them. I heard of a brother preaching from the text, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves." He began his discourse thus, "I do not say that this man came to the place where we are, but I do know another man who did come to this place, and fell among thieves." You can easily guess what would be the result of such vitriol-throwing. I know of one who preached from the passage, "And Aaron held his peace," and one who heard him said that the difference between him and Aaron was, that Aaron held his peace, and the preacher did not; but, on the contrary, he raved at the people with all his might.

You must have a real desire for the good of the people if you are to have much influence over them. Why, even dogs and cats love the people who love them, and human beings are much the same as these dumb animals. People very soon get to know when a cold man gets into the pulpit, one of those who seem to have been carved out of a block of marble. There have been one or two of our brethren of that kind, and they have never succeeded anywhere. When I have asked the cause of their failure, in each case the reply has been, "He is a good man, a very good man; he preaches well, very well, but still we do not get on with him." I have asked, "Why do you not like him?" The reply has been, "Nobody ever did like him." "Is he quarrelsome?" "Oh! dear no, I wish he would make a row." I try to fish out what the drawback is, for I am very anxious to know, and at last someone says, "Well, sir, I do not think he has any heart; at least, he does not preach and act as if he had any."

It is very sad when the failure of any ministry is caused by want of heart. You ought to have a great big heart, like the harbour at Portsmouth or Plymouth, so that all the people in your congregation could come and cast anchor in it, and feel that they were under the lee of a great rock. Do you not notice that men succeed in the ministry, and win souls for Christ, just in proportion as they are men with large hearts? Think, for instance, of Dr. Brock; there was a mass of a man, one who had bowels of compassion; and what is the good of a minister who has not? I do not hold up the accumulation of flesh as an object worthy of your attainment; but I do say that you must have big hearts, if you are to win men to Jesus; you must be Great-hearts if you are to lead many pilgrims to the Celestial City. I have seen some very lean men who said that they were perfectly holy, and I could almost believe that they could not sin, for they were like old bits of leather, there did not appear to be anything in them that was capable of sinning. I met one of these "perfect" brethren once, and he was just like a piece of sea-weed, there was no humanity in him. I like to see a trace of humanity somewhere or other about a man, and people in general like it, too; they get on better with a man who has some human nature in him. Human nature, in some aspects, is an awful thing; but when the Lord Jesus Christ took it, and joined his own divine nature to it, He made a grand thing of it, and human nature is a noble thing when it is united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those men who keep themselves

to themselves, like hermits, and live a supposed sanctified life of self-absorption, are not likely to have any influence in the world, or to do good to their fellow-creatures. You must love the people, and mix with them, if you are to be of service to them. There are some ministers who really are much better men than others, yet they do not accomplish so much good as those who are more human, those who go and sit down with the people, and make themselves as much as possible at home with them. You know, brethren, that it is possible for you to appear to be just a wee bit too good, so that people will feel that you are altogether transcendental beings, and fitter to preach to angels, and cherubim, and seraphim, than to the fallen sons of Adam. Just be men among men; keeping yourselves clear of all their faults and vices, but mingling with them in perfect love and sympathy, and feeling that you would do anything in your power to bring them to Christ, so that you might even say, with the apostle Paul, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law of Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

The next qualification, manward, for soul-winning is *evident unselfishness*. A man ceases to bring men to Christ as soon as he becomes known as a selfish man. Selfishness seems to be ingrained in some people; you see it at the table at home, in the house of God, everywhere. When such individuals come to deal with a church and congregation, their selfishness soon manifests itself; they mean to get all they can, although in the Baptist ministry they do not often get much. I hope each of you, brethren, will be willing to say, "Well, let me have but food and raiment, and I will be therewith content." If you try to put the thought of money altogether away from you, the money will often come back to you doubled; but if you seek to grab and grasp all, you will very likely find that it will not come to you at all. Those who are selfish in the matter of salary, will be the same in everything else; they will not want their people to know anybody who can preach better than themselves; and they cannot bear to hear of any good work going on anywhere except in their own chapel. If there is a revival at another place, and souls are being saved, they say, with a sneer, "Oh! yes, there are many converts, but what are they? Where will they be in a few months' time?" They think far more of their own gain of one new member per year than of their neighbour's hundred at one time. If your people see that kind of selfishness in you, you will soon lose power over them; if you make up your mind that you will be a great man, whoever has to be thrust on one side, you will go to the cats as sure as you are alive. What are you, my dear brother, that people should all bow down and worship you, and think that in all the world

there is none beside you? I tell you what it is; the less you think of yourself, the more people will think of you; and the more you think of yourself, the less will people think of you. If any of you have any trace of selfishness about you, pray get rid of it at once, or you will never be fit instruments for the winning of souls for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then I am sure that another thing that is wanted in a soul-winner is *holiness of character*. It is no use talking about “the higher life” on Sundays, and then living the lower life on week days. A Christian minister must be very careful, not only to be innocent of actual wrong-doing, but not to be a cause of offence to the weak ones of the flock. All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient. We ought never to do anything that we judge to be wrong, but we ought also to be willing to abstain from things which might not be wrong in themselves, but which might be an occasion of stumbling to others. When people see that we not only preach about holiness, but that we are ourselves holy men, they will be drawn towards holy things by our character as well as by our preaching.

I think also that, if we are to be soul-winners, there must be about us a *seriousness of manner*. Some brethren are serious by nature. There was a gentleman in a railway carriage, some time ago, who overheard a conversation between two of the passengers. One of them said, “Well, now, I think the Church of Rome has great power, and is likely to succeed with the people, because of the evident holiness of her ministers. There is, for instance, Cardinal ——, he is just like a skeleton; through his long fasting and prayers, he has reduced himself almost to skin and bone. Whenever I hear him speak, I feel at once the force of the holiness of the man. Now, look at Spurgeon, he eats and drinks like an ordinary mortal; I would not give a pin to hear him preach.” His friend heard him very patiently, and then said quite quietly, “Did it ever strike you that the Cardinal’s appearance was to be accounted for by the fact of his liver being out of order? I do not think it is grace that makes him as lean as he is, I believe it is his liver.” So, there are some brethren who are naturally of a melancholy disposition, they are always very serious; but in them it is not a sign of grace, it is only an indication that their livers are out of order. They never laugh, they think it would be wicked to do so; but they go about the world increasing the misery of human kind, which is dreadful enough without the addition of their unnecessary portion. Such people evidently imagine that they were predestinated to pour buckets of cold water upon all human mirth and joy. So, dear brethren, if any of you are very serious, you must not always attribute it to grace, for it may be all owing to the state of your liver.

The most of us, however, are far more inclined to that laughter which doeth good like medicine, and we shall need all our cheerfulness, if we are to comfort and lift up those who are cast down; but we shall never bring many souls to Christ, if we are full of that levity which characterises some men. People will say, “It is all a joke; just hear how those young fellows jest about religion, it is

one thing to listen to them when they are in the pulpit, but it is quite another matter to listen to them when they are sitting round the supper table." I have heard of a man who was dying, and he sent for the minister to come and see him. When the minister came in, the dying man said to him, "Do you remember a young man walking with you one evening, some years ago, when you were going out to preach?" He said, he did not. "I recollect it very well," replied the other. "Do you not remember preaching at such-and-such a village, from such-and-such a text, and after the service a young man walked home with you?" "Oh, yes, I remember that very well!" "Well, I am the young man who walked home with you that night; I remember your sermon, I shall never forget it." "Thank God for that," said the preacher. "No," answered the dying man, "you will not thank God when you have heard all I have to say. I walked with you to the village, but you did not say much to me on the way there, for you were thinking over your sermon; you deeply impressed me while you were preaching, and I was led to think about giving my heart to Christ. I wanted to speak to you about my soul on the way home; but the moment you got out you cracked a joke, and all the way back you made such fun upon serious subjects, that I could not say anything about what I felt, and it thoroughly disgusted me with religion, and all who professed it, and now I am going to be damned, and my blood will lie at your door, as sure as you are alive:" and so he passed out of the world. One would not like anything of that sort to happen to himself; therefore, take heed, brethren, that you give no occasion for it. There must be a prevailing seriousness about our whole lives, otherwise we cannot hope to lead other men to Christ.

Finally if we are to be much used of God as soul-winners, there must be in our hearts *a great deal of tenderness*; I like a man to have a due amount of holy boldness, but I do not care to see him brazenfaced and impudent. A young man goes into a pulpit, apologizes for attempting to preach, and hopes the people will bear with him; he does not know that he has anything particular to say, if the Lord had sent him he might have had some message for them, but he feels himself so young and inexperienced that he cannot speak very positively about anything. Such talk as that will never save a mouse, much less an immortal soul. If the Lord has sent you to preach the gospel, why should you make any apologies? Ambassadors do not apologise when they go to a foreign court; they know that their monarch has sent them, and they deliver their message with all the authority of king and country at their back. Nor is it worthwhile for you to call attention to your youth. You are only a trumpet of ram's horn; and it does not matter whether you were pulled off the ram's head yesterday, or five-and-twenty years ago. If God blows through you, there will be noise enough, and something more than noise; if He does not, nothing will come of the blowing. When you preach speak out straight, but be very tender about it; and if there is an unpleasant thing to be said, take care that you put it in the kindest possible

form. Some of our brethren had a message to deliver to a certain Christian brother, and when they went to him they put it so awkwardly that he was grievously offended. When I spoke to him about the same matter, he said, "I would not have minded your speaking to me; you have a way of putting an unpleasant truth so that a man cannot be offended with you however much he may dislike the message you bring to him." "Well, but," I said, "I put the matter just as strongly as the other brethren did." "Yes, you did," he replied, "but they said it in such a nasty kind of a way that I would not stand it. Why, sir, I had rather be blown up by you than praised by those other people!" There is a way of doing such things so that the person reprov'd feels positively grateful to you. One may kick a man downstairs in such a fashion that he will rather like it; while another may open a door in such an offensive way that you do not want to go through till he is out of the way. Now, if I have to tell anyone certain unpalatable truths which it is necessary that he should know if his soul is to be saved, it is a stern necessity for me to be faithful to him; yet I will try so to deliver my message that he shall not be offended at it. Then, if he does take offence, he must; the probability is that he will not, but that what I say will take effect upon his conscience.

I know some brethren who preach as if they were prize-fighters. When they are in the pulpit they remind me of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair; all the way through the sermon they appear to be calling upon someone to come up and fight them, and they are never happy except when they are pitching into somebody or other. There is a man who often preaches on Clapham Common, and he does it so pugnaciously that the infidels whom he assails cannot endure it, and there are frequent fights and rows. There is a way of preaching so as to set everybody by the ears; if some men were allowed to preach in heaven, I am afraid they would set the angels fighting. I know a number of ministers of this stamp. There is one who, to my certain knowledge, has been at over a dozen places during his not very long ministerial life. You can tell where he has been by the ruin he leaves behind him. He always finds the churches in a sad state, and he straightway begins to purify them, that is, to destroy them. As a general rule, the first thing, out goes the principal deacon, and the next, away go all the leading families, and before long, the man has purified the place so effectually that the few people who are left cannot keep him. Off he goes to another place, and repeats the process of destruction. He is a kind of spiritual ship-scuttler, and he is never happy except when he is boring a hole through the planks of some good vessel. He says he believes the ship is unsound; so he bores, and bores, until just as she is going down, he slips off, and gets aboard another vessel, which very soon sinks in the same manner. He feels that he is called to the work of separating the precious from the vile, and a precious vile mess he makes of it. I have no reason to believe it is the condition of the liver with this brother, it is more likely that there is something wrong with his heart; certainly, there is an

evil disease upon him that always makes me get into a bad temper with him. It is dangerous to entertain him above three days, for he would quarrel in that time with the most peaceably disposed man in the world. I never mean to recommend him to a pastorate again; let him find a place for himself if he can, for I believe that, wherever he goes, the place will be like the spot where the foot of the Tartar's horse is put down, the grass will never again grow there. If any of you brethren have even a little bit of this nasty, bitter spirit about you, go to sea that you may get rid of it. I hope it may happen to you according to the legend which is told concerning Mahomet. "In every human being," so the story runs, "there are two black drops of sin. The great prophet himself was not free from the common lot of evil; but an angel was sent to take his heart, and squeeze out of it the two black drops of sin." Get those black drops out somehow while you are in College; if you have any malice, or ill-will, or bad temper in you, pray the Lord to take it out of you while you are here; do not go into the churches to fight as others have done.

"Still," says a brother, "I am not going to let the people tread on me. I shall take the bull by the horns." You will be a great fool if you do. I never felt that I was called to do anything of the kind. Why not let the bull alone, to go where he likes? A bull is a very likely creature to project you into space if you get meddling with his horns. "Still," says another, "we must set things right." Yes, but the best way to set things right is not to make them more wrong than they are. Nobody thinks of putting a mad bull into a china shop in order to get the china cleaned, and no one can by a display of evil temper set right anything that is wrong in our churches. Take care always to speak the truth in love, and especially when you are rebuking sin.

I believe, brethren, that soul-winning is to be done by men of the character I have been describing; and most of all will this be the case when they are surrounded by people of a similar character. You want to get the very atmosphere in which you live and labour permeated with this spirit before you can rightly expect the fullest and richest blessings. Therefore, may you and all your people be all that I have pictured, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.