

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."

SERMONS LIKELY TO WIN SOULS.

This afternoon, brethren, I am going to speak to you about—

THE KIND OF SERMONS THAT ARE MOST LIKELY TO CONVERT PEOPLE, the sort of discourses we should deliver if we really want our hearers to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be saved. Of course, we are all perfectly agreed that the Holy Spirit alone can convert a soul; none can enter the kingdom of God except they are born again from above. All the work is done by the Holy Spirit; and we must not take to ourselves any part of the credit for the result of the work, for it is the Spirit who new-creates and works in man according to the eternal purpose of God.

Still, we may be instruments in His hands, for He chooses to use instruments, and He chooses them for wise reasons. There must be an adaptation of means to the end, as there was with David when he went forth with the sling and stone to slay Goliath of Gath. Goliath was a tall fellow, but a stone from a sling can mount; and, besides, the giant was armed and protected, and scarcely vulnerable except in his forehead, so that was the very place to hit him. Though David took a sling, it was not so much because he had no other weapon as that he had practised slinging, as most boys do in some form or other; and then he chose a smooth stone because he knew it would fit the sling. He took the right kind of stone to enter Goliath's head, so, when he slung it at the giant, it struck him in the forehead, penetrated his brain, and he sank down to the ground.

You will find that this principle of adaptation runs through the whole work of the Holy Spirit. If a man is wanted to be the apostle of the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit selects the large-minded, well-trained, highly-educated Paul, for he was more fit for such work than was the somewhat narrow though strong-minded Peter, who was better suited for preaching to the Jews, and who was of far more use to the circumcision than he ever could have been among the uncircumcision. Paul in his place is the right man, and Peter in his place is the right man. You may see in this principle a lesson for yourselves, and seek to adapt your means to your end. God the Holy Spirit can convert a soul by any text of Scripture apart from your paraphrase, your comment, your exposition; but there are certain Scripture passages, as you know, that are the best to bring before the minds of sinners, and if this is true about your texts, much more is it so in your discourses to your hearers. As to which sermons are most likely to be blessed to the conversion of those to whom they are preached, I should say:

First, they are *those sermons which are distinctly aimed at the conversion of the hearers*. I heard a prayer, some time ago, from a minister who asked the Lord to save souls by the sermon he was about to deliver. I do not hesitate to

say that God Himself could not bless the sermon to that end unless He made the people misunderstand all that the preacher said to them, because the whole discourse was rather calculated to harden the sinner in his sin than to lead him to renounce it, and to seek the Saviour. There was nothing in it that could be blessed to any hearer unless he turned it inside out or bottom upwards. The sermon did me good on the principle that was applied by a good old lady to the minister she was obliged to hear. When asked, "Why do you go to such a place?" she replied, "Well, there is no other place of worship to which I can go." "But it must be better to stay at home than to hear such stuff," said her friend. "Perhaps so," she answered, "but I like to go out to worship even if I get nothing by going. You see a hen sometimes scratching all over a heap of rubbish to try to find some corn; she does not get any, but it shows that she is looking for it, and using the means to get it, and then, too, the exercise warms her." So the old lady said that scratching over the poor sermons she heard was a blessing to her because it exercised her spiritual faculties, and warmed her spirit.

There are sermons of such a kind that, unless God takes to ripening wheat by means of snow and ice, and begins to illuminate the world by means of fogs and clouds, He cannot save souls under them. Why, the preacher himself evidently does not think that anybody will be converted by them! If a hundred persons or if half a dozen were converted by them, nobody would be so astonished as the preacher himself; in fact, I know a man who was converted, or at least convicted, under the preaching of a minister of that kind. In a certain parish church, as the result of the clergyman's preaching, there was a man who was under deep conviction of sin. He went down to see his minister, but the poor man did not know what to make of him, and said to him, "I am very sorry if there was anything in my sermon to make you uncomfortable; I did not mean it to be so." "Well, sir," answered the troubled man, "you said that we must be born again." "Oh!" replied the clergyman, "that was all done in baptism." "But, sir," said the man, who was not to be put off, "you did not say so in your sermon; you spoke of the necessity of regeneration." "Well, I am very sorry I said anything to make you uncomfortable, for really I think all is right with you. You are a good sort of a fellow; you were never a poacher, or anything else that is bad." "That may be, sir, but I have a sense of sin, and you said we must be new creatures." "Well, well, my good man," at last said the perplexed parson, "I do not understand such things; I never was born again." He sent him to the Baptist minister, and the man is now himself a Baptist minister, partly as the result of what he learned from the preacher who did not himself understand the truth he had declared to others.

Of course, God can convert a soul by such a sermon as that, and by such a minister as that, but it is not likely; it is more probable that, in His infinite sovereignty, He will work in a place where a warm-hearted man is preaching to men the truth that he has himself received, all the while earnestly desiring their

salvation, and ready to guide them further in the ways of the Lord as soon as ever they are saved. God does not usually lay His new-born children down amongst people where the new life will not be understood, or where it will be left without any proper nurture or care; so, brethren, if you want your hearers to be converted, you must just see that your preaching aims directly at conversion, and that it is such as God will be likely to bless to that end. When that is the case, then look for souls to be saved, and look for a great number of them, too. Do not be satisfied when a single soul is converted. Remember that the rule of the kingdom is, "According to your faith be it unto you." I said last night, in my sermon in the Tabernacle, that I was glad it was not written, "According to thine unbelief, so be it unto thee." If there be in us a great faith, God will give us blessing according to our faith. Oh, that we were altogether rid of unbelief, that we believed great things of God, and with heart and soul so preached that men were likely to be converted by such discourses, proclaiming truths likely to convert them, and declaring them in a manner that would be likely to be blessed to the conversion of our hearers! Of course, all the while we must be trusting to the Holy Spirit to make the work effectual, for we are but the instruments in His hands.

But coming a little closer to our subject, if the people are to be saved, it must be by *sermons that interest them*. You have first to get them to come under the sound of the gospel, for there is, at all events in London, a great aversion to a place of worship, and I am not much surprised that it is so concerning many churches and chapels. I think, in many instances, the common people do not attend such services because they do not understand the theological "lingo" that is used in the pulpit; it is neither English, nor Greek, but Double-dutch; and when a working man goes once and listens to these fine words, he says to his wife, "I do not go there again, Sal; there is nothing there for me, nor yet for you; there may be a good deal for a gentleman that's been to College, but there is nothing for the likes of us." No, brethren, we must preach in what Whitefield used to call "market language" if we would have all classes of the community listening to our message.

Then, when they do come in, we must preach interestingly. The people will not be converted while they are asleep; and if they go to sleep, they had better have been at home in bed, where they would sleep much more comfortably. We must have the minds of our hearers awake and active if we are to do them real good. You will not shoot your birds unless you get them to fly, you must get them started up from the long grass in which they are hiding. I would sooner use a little of what some very proper preachers regard as a dreadful thing, that wicked thing called humour—I would sooner wake the congregation up that way than have it said that I droned away at them until we all went to sleep together. Sometimes, it may be quite right to have it said of us as it was said of Rowland Hill, "What does that man mean? He actually made the people laugh

while he was preaching.” “Yes,” was the wise answer, “but did you not see that he made them cry directly after?” That was good work, and it was well done. I sometimes tickle my oyster until he opens his shell, and then I slip the knife in. He would not have opened for my knife, but he did for something else; and that is the way to do with people. They must be made to open their eyes, and ears, and souls, somehow; and when you get them open, you must feel, “Now is my opportunity; in with the knife.” There is one vulnerable spot in the hides of those rhinoceros sinners that come to hear you; but take care that, if you do get a shot through that weak spot, it shall be a thorough gospel bullet, for nothing else will accomplish the work that needs to be done.

Moreover, the people must be interested to make them remember what is said. They will not recollect what they hear unless the subject interests them. They forget our fine perorations, they cannot recall our very pretty pieces of poetry—I do not know that they would do them any good if they did remember them; but we must tell our hearers something they will not be likely to forget. I believe in what Father Taylor calls “the surprise power of a sermon;” that is, something that is not expected by those who are listening to it. Just when they reckon that you are sure to say something very precise and straight, say something awkward and crooked, because they will remember that, and you will have tied a gospel knot where it is likely to remain. I remember reading of a tailor who had made his fortune, and he promised to tell his brother-tailors how he had done it. They gathered around his bed when he was dying, and he said, as they all listened very attentively, “Now I am to tell you how you tailors are to make your fortunes; this is the way, always put a knot in your thread.” I give that same advice to you preachers, always put a knot in your thread; if there is a knot in the thread, it does not come out of the material. Some preachers put in the needle all right, but there is no knot in their thread, so it passes through and they have really done nothing after all. Put a good many knots in your discourses, brethren, so that there may be all the greater probability that they will remain in your people’s memories. You do not want your preaching to be like the sewing done by some machines, for, if one stitch breaks, the whole will come undone. There ought to be plenty of “burrs” in a sermon—Mr. Fergusson will tell you what “burrs” are; I’ll warrant you that he has often found them clinging to his coat in his bonnie Scotland. Put these “burrs” all over the people; say something that will strike them, something that will stick to them for many a day, and that will be likely to bless them. I believe that a sermon, under God’s smile, is likely to be the means of conversion if it has this peculiarity about it, that it is interesting to the hearers as well as directly aimed at their salvation.

The third thing in a sermon that is likely to win souls to Christ is, *it must be instructive*. If people are to be saved by a discourse, it must contain at least some measure of knowledge. There must be light as well as fire. Some preachers are all light and no fire, and others are all fire and no light; what we want is both

fire and light. I do not judge those brethren who are all fire and fury; but I wish they had a little more knowledge of what they talk about, and I think it would be well if they did not begin quite so soon to preach what they hardly understand themselves. It is a fine thing to stand up in the street, and cry, "Believe! Believe! Believe! Believe! Believe! Believe!" Yes, my dear soul, but what have we to believe? What is all this noise about? Preachers of this sort are like a little boy who had been crying, and something happened that stopped him in the middle of his cry, and presently he said, "Ma, please what was I crying about?" Emotion, doubtless, is a very proper thing in the pulpit, and the feeling, the pathos, the power of heart, are good and grand things in the right place; but do also use your brains a little, do tell us something when you stand up to preach the everlasting gospel.

The sermons that are most likely to convert people seem to me to be those that are full of truth, truth about the fall, truth about the law, truth about human nature, and its alienation from God, truth about Jesus Christ, truth about the Holy Spirit, truth about the Everlasting Father, truth about the new birth, truth about obedience to God, and how we learn it, and all such great verities. Tell your hearers something, dear brethren, whenever you preach, tell them something, tell them something!

Of course, some good may come, even if your hearers do not understand you. I suppose it might be so, for there was a very esteemed lady speaking to the Friends gathered at the Devonshire House meeting. She was a most gracious woman, and was addressing the English Friends in Dutch, and she asked one of the brethren to translate for her, but the hearers said there was so much power and spirit about her speaking, though it was in Dutch, that they did not want it translated, for they were getting as much good out of it as was possible. Now, these hearers were Friends, and they are men of different mould from me, for I do not mind how good a woman the esteemed lady was, I should have liked to know what she was talking about, and I am sure I should not have been in the least degree profited unless it had been translated; and I like ministers always to know what they are talking about, and to be sure that there is something in it worth saying. Do try, therefore, dear brethren, to give your hearers something beside a string of pathetic anecdotes that will set them crying. Tell the people something; you are to teach them, to preach the gospel to your hearers, to make them understand as far as you can things which should make for their peace. We cannot expect people to be saved by our sermons, unless we try really to instruct them by what we say to them.

Fourthly, *the people must be impressed by our sermons, if they are to be converted.* They must not only be interested and instructed, but they must be impressed; and, I believe, dear friends, there is a great deal more in impressive sermons than some people think. In order that you may impress the Word upon those to whom you preach, remember that it must be impressed upon yourself

first. You must feel it yourself, and speak as a man who feels it, not *as if* you feel it, but *because* you feel it, otherwise you will not make it felt by others. I wonder what it must be to go up into the pulpit, and read somebody else's sermon to the congregation. We read in the Bible of one thing that was borrowed, and the head of that came off; and I am afraid that the same thing often happens with borrowed sermons—the heads come off. Men who read borrowed sermons positively do not know anything about our troubles of mind in preparing for the pulpit, or our joy in preaching with the aid of only brief notes. A dear friend of mine, who reads his own sermons, was talking to me about preaching, and I was telling him how my very soul is moved, and my very heart is stirred within me, when I think of what I shall say to my people, and afterward when I am delivering my message; but he said that he never felt anything of the kind when he was preaching. He reminded me of the little girl who was crying because her teeth ached, and her grandmother said to her, "Lilly, I wonder you are not ashamed to cry about such a small matter." "Well, grandmother," answered the little maid, "it is all very well for you to say that, for, when your teeth ache, you can take them out, but mine are fixed." Some brethren, when the sermon they have selected will not run smoothly, can go to their box, and take out another; but when I have a sermon full of joy, and I myself feel heavy and sad, I am utterly miserable; when I want to beg and persuade men to believe, and my spirit is dull and cold, I feel wretched to the last degree. My teeth ache, and I cannot take them out, for they are my own; as my sermons are my own, and therefore I may expect to find a good deal of trouble, both in the getting of them, and in the using of them.

I remember the answer I received when I once said to my venerable grandfather, "I never have to preach, but that I feel terribly sick, literally sick, I mean, so that I might as well be crossing the Channel," and I asked the dear old man whether he thought I should ever get over that feeling. His answer was, "Your power will be gone if you do." So, my brethren, when it is not so much that you have got a hold of your subject, but that it has got a hold of you, and you feel its grip with a terrible reality yourself, that is the kind of sermon that is most likely to make others feel. If you are not impressed with it yourself, you cannot expect to impress others with it; so mind that your sermons always have something in them which shall really impress both yourself and the hearers whom you are addressing.

I think also that there should be an impressive delivery of our discourses. The delivery of some preachers is very bad; if yours is so, try and improve it in all possible ways. One young man wanted to learn singing, but he was told by the teacher, "You have only one tone to your voice, and that is outside the scale." So, there are some ministers' voices that have only one tone, and there is no music in that one. Do try, as far as you can, to make the very way in which you speak to minister to the great end you have in view. Preach, for instance, as you

would plead if you were standing before a judge, and begging for the life of a friend, or as if you were appealing to the Queen herself on behalf of someone very dear to you. Use such a tone in pleading with sinners as you would use if a gibbet were erected in this room, and you were to be hanged on it unless you could persuade the person in authority to release you. That is the sort of earnestness you need in pleading with men as ambassadors for God. Try and make every sermon such that the most flippant shall see without any doubt that, if it be an amusement for them to hear you, it is no amusement for you to speak to them, but that you are pleading with them in downright solemn earnest about eternal matters. I have often felt just like this when I have been preaching—I have known what it is to use up all my ammunition, and then I have, as it were, rammed myself into the great gospel gun, and I have fired myself at my hearers, all my experience of God's goodness, all my consciousness of sin, and all my sense of the power of the gospel; and there are some people upon whom that kind of preaching tells where nothing else would have done, for they see that then you communicate to them not only the gospel, but yourself also. The kind of sermon which is likely to break the hearer's heart is that which has first broken the preacher's heart, and the sermon which is likely to reach the heart of the hearer is the one which has come straight from the heart of the preacher; therefore, dear brethren, always seek to preach so that the people shall be impressed as well as interested and instructed.

Fifthly, I think that we should try *to take out of our sermons everything that is likely to divert the hearers' mind from the object we have in view.*

The best style of preaching in the world, like the best style of dressing, is that which nobody notices. Somebody went to spend the evening with Hannah More, and when he came home his wife asked him, "How was Miss More dressed? She must have been dressed very splendidly." The gentleman answered: "Really she was—why, dear me, how was she dressed? I did not notice at all how she was dressed; anyway, there was nothing particularly noticeable in her dress, she was herself the object of interest." That is the way that a true lady is dressed, so that we notice her, and not her garments; she is so well dressed that we do not know how she is dressed, and that is the best way of dressing a sermon. Let it never be said of you, as it is sometimes said of certain popular preachers, "He did the thing so majestically, he spoke with such lofty diction, etc., etc., etc."

Never introduce anything into your discourse that would be likely to distract the attention of the hearer from the great object you have in view. If you take the sinner's mind off the main subject—speaking after the manner of men, there is so much less likelihood of his receiving the impression you desire to convey, and, consequently, the smaller probability of his being converted. I remember once reading what Mr. Finney said in his book on "Revivals." He said that there was a person on the point of being converted, and just then an old woman, with

pattens on, came shuffling up the aisle, making a great noise, and that soul was lost! I know what the evangelist meant, though I do not like the form in which the matter was put by him. The noise of the old lady's pattens probably did take off the person's mind from the thing he should have been thinking upon, and it is quite possible that he could not be brought back to exactly the same position again. We are to look to all these little things as if everything depended upon us, at the same time remembering that it is the Holy Spirit alone who can make the work effectual.

Your sermon should not take off the people's attention through its being only very distantly related to the text. There are many hearers still left who believe that there should be some sort of connection between the sermon and the text, and if they begin asking themselves, "How ever did the minister get right over there? What has his talk to do with the text?"—you will have lost their attention, and that wandering habit of yours may be a very destructive one to them; therefore, keep to your texts, brethren. If you do not, you will be like the little boy who went out fishing, and his uncle said to him: "Have you caught many fish, Samuel?" The boy answered, "I have been fishing for three hours, uncle, and I have not caught any fish, but I have lost a lot of worms." I hope you will never have to say, "I did not win any souls for the Saviour, but I spoiled a lot of precious texts; I confused and confounded many passages of Scripture, but I did no good with them. I was not supremely anxious to learn the mind of the Spirit as revealed in the text so as to get its meaning into my own mind, although it took a deal of squeezing and packing to get my mind into the text." That is not a good thing to do; stick to your texts, brethren, as the cobbler is bidden to stick to his last, and seek to get out of the Scriptures what the Holy Spirit has put into them. Never let your hearers have to ask the question, "What has this sermon to do with the text?" If you do, the people will not be profited, and it may be that they will not be saved.

I would say to you brethren, you of these two Colleges,[†] get all the education that you can, drink in everything that your tutors can possibly impart to you. It will take you all your time to get out of them all that is in them; but you should endeavour to learn all that you can, because, believe me, a want of education may hinder the work of soul-winning. That '*orrible*' omission of the letter "h" from places where it ought to be, that aspiration of the "h" till you exasperate it altogether—you cannot tell what mischiefs such mistakes may cause. There was a young friend who might have been converted, for she did seem greatly impressed by your discourse; but she was so disgusted by the dreadful way in which you put in "h's" where they ought not to be, or left them out where they

[†] This lecture was delivered on a Friday afternoon, when the tutors and students from Harley House came to meet their brethren at the Pastors' College.

ought to be in, that she could not listen to you with any pleasure, and her attention was distracted from the truth by your errors of pronunciation. That letter “h” has done vast mischief, it is “the letter that killeth” in the case of a great many, and all sorts of grammatical blunders may do more harm than you can imagine. You may think, perhaps, that I am speaking of trifling matters that are hardly worthy of consideration; but I am not, for these things may cause most serious results; and as it is easy to learn to speak and write correct English, do try and know all you can of it.

Perhaps someone says, “Well, I know such-and-such a successful brother, and he was not an educated man.” That is true; but mark you this, the times are altering. One young woman said to another, “I do not see why we girls need learn so many lessons. The young women before us did not know much, and yet they got married.” “Yes,” said her companion, “but then, you know, there were no Board Schools in them days; but now the young men will be educated, and it will be a poor look-out for us as ain’t.” A young man might say, “Such-and-such a minister was ungrammatical. and yet he did well”; but the people of his day were ungrammatical, too, so it did not matter so much; but now, when they have all been to the Board Schools, if they come and listen to you, it will be a pity if their mind is taken off the solemn things which you wish them to think upon because they cannot help noticing your deficiencies of education. Even if you are not an educated man, God may bless you; but wisdom tells us that we should not let our want of education hinder the gospel from blessing men.

“But,” possibly you say, “they must be very hypercritical to find fault like that.” But, then, do not hypercritical people need saving just as much as other people? I would not have a hypercritical person who could truthfully say that my preaching so jarred upon his ear, and disturbed his mind, that he could not possibly receive the doctrine which I was trying to set before him. Did you ever hear how it was that Charles Dickens would not become a spiritualist? At a seance he asked to see the spirit of Lindley Murray: There came in what professed to be the spirit of Lindley Murray, and Dickens asked, “Are you Lindley Murray?” The reply came, “*I are.*” There was no hope of Dickens’ conversion to spiritualism after that ungrammatical answer. You may well laugh at the story, but mind that you recollect the moral of it. You can easily see that, by forgetting when to use the nominative or accusative case of a noun or pronoun, or by using the wrong tense of a verb, you might take off the mind of your hearer from what you are trying to bring before him, and so prevent the truth from reaching his heart and conscience. Therefore, divest your sermons as much as ever you can of everything that is at all likely to take away the mind of your hearers from the one object before you. The whole attention and thought of the people must be concentrated on the truth we are setting before them if we are so to preach as to save those who come within sound of our voice.

Sixthly, I believe that *those sermons which are fullest of Christ are the most*

likely to be blessed to the conversion of the hearers. Let your sermons be full of Christ, from beginning to end crammed full of the gospel. As for myself, brethren, I cannot preach anything else but Christ and his cross, for I know nothing else, and long ago, like the apostle Paul, I determined not to know anything else save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. People have often asked me, “What is the secret of your success?” I always answer that I have no other secret but this, that I have preached the gospel—not about the gospel, but the gospel—the full, free, glorious gospel of the living Christ who is the incarnation of the good news. Preach Jesus Christ, brethren, always and everywhere; and every time you preach be sure to have much of Jesus Christ in the sermon. You remember the story of the old minister who heard a sermon by a young man, and when he was asked by the preacher what he thought of it he was rather slow to answer, but at last he said, “If I must tell you, I did not like it at all; there was no Christ in your sermon.” “No,” answered the young man, “because I did not see that Christ was in the text.” “Oh!” said the old minister, “but do you not know that from every little town and village and tiny hamlet in England there is a road leading to London? Whenever I get hold of a text, I say to myself, ‘There is a road from here to Jesus Christ, and I mean to keep on His track till I get to Him?’” “Well,” said the young man, “but suppose you are preaching from a text that says nothing about Christ?” “Then I will go over hedge and ditch but what I will get at Him.” So must we do, brethren; we must have Christ in all our discourses, whatever else is in or not in them. There ought to be enough of the gospel in every sermon to save a soul. Take care that it is so when you are called to preach before Her Majesty the Queen, and if you have to preach to charwomen or chairmen, still always take care that there is the real gospel in every sermon.

I have heard of a young man asking, when he was going to preach in a certain place, “What kind of church is it? What do the people believe? What is their doctrinal view?” I will tell you how to avoid the necessity of such a question as that; preach Jesus Christ to them, and if that does not suit their doctrinal views then preach Jesus Christ the next Sunday you go; and do the same thing the next Sabbath, and the next, and the next, and never preach anything else. Those who do not like Jesus Christ must have Him preached to them till they do like Him; for they are the very people who need Him most. Recollect that all the tradesmen in the world say that they can sell their goods when there is a demand for them, but our goods create as well as supply the demand. We preach Jesus Christ to those who want Him, and we also preach Him to those who do not want Him, and we keep on preaching Christ until we make them feel that they do want Him, and cannot do without Him.

Seventhly, brethren, it is my firm conviction that *those sermons are most likely to convert men that really appeal to their hearts*, not those that are fired over their heads, or that are aimed only at their intellects. I am sorry to say that

I know some preachers who will never do much good in the world; they are good men, they have plenty of ability, they can speak well, and they have a good deal of shrewdness; but, somehow or other, there is a very sad omission in their nature, for to anyone who knows them, it is quite evident that they have not any heart. I know one or two men who are as dry as leather. If you were to hang them up on the wall, as you do a piece of seaweed, to tell what kind of weather it is to be, they would be no guide to you, for scarcely any weather would affect them.

But I also know some men who are the very reverse of these brethren. They are not likely to win souls, for they are themselves so flippant, and frivolous, and foolish, there is nothing serious about them, nothing to show that they are living in earnest. I cannot find any traces of a soul in them; they are too shallow to contain one, it could not live in the inch or two of water that is all that they hold, they appear to have been made without any soul, so they cannot do any good in preaching the gospel. You must have souls, brothers, if you are to look after your brothers' souls, depend upon that; as you must have a heart if you are to reach your brother's heart.

Here is another kind of man,—one who cannot weep over sinners—what is the good of him in the ministry? He never did weep over men in his life; he never agonized before God on their behalf; he never said with Jeremiah, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” I know a brother like this. In a meeting of ministers, after we had been confessing our shortcomings, he said that he was very much ashamed of us all. Well, no doubt, we ought to have been more ashamed of ourselves than we were; but he told us that, if we had truly meant what we had said in our confessions to God, we were a disgrace to the ministry; perhaps we were. He said he was not like that; so far as he knew, he never preached a sermon without feeling that it was the best he could preach, and he did not know that he could do any better than he had done. He was a man who always studied just so many hours every day, always prayed exactly so many minutes, always preached a certain length of time, in fact, he was the most regular man I ever knew. When I heard him talk as he had done to us, I asked myself, “What does his ministry show as the result of this perfect way of doing things?” Why, it did not show anything at all that was satisfactory. He has great gifts of dispersion; for, if he goes to a full chapel, he soon empties it; yet he is, I believe, a good man in his way. I could wish that his clock would sometimes stop, or strike in the middle of the half-hour, or that something extraordinary might happen to him, because some good might come of it; but he is so regular and orderly, that there is no hope of his doing anything, the fault with him is that he has not any fault. You will notice, brethren, that preachers who have no faults have no excellences either; so try to avoid that flat, dead level and everything else that makes people less likely to be converted.

Coming back to that matter of the possession of a heart, of which I was speaking, I asked a young girl, who came lately to join the church, "Have you a good heart?" She replied, "Yes, sir." I said, "Have you thought over that question? Have you not an evil heart?" "Oh, yes!" she answered. "Well," I said, "how do your two answers agree?" "Why," responded the girl, "I know that I have a good heart, because God has given me a new heart and a right spirit; and I also know that I have an evil heart, for I often find it fighting against my new heart." She was right, and I had sooner feel that a minister had two hearts than that he had none at all. It must be heart-work with you, brethren, far more than head-work, if you are to win many souls. Amidst all your studies, mind that you never let your spiritual life get dry. There is no necessity that it should, although with many study has had that effect. My dear brethren, the tutors, will bear me witness that there is a very drying influence about Latin, and Greek, and Hebrew. That couplet is true—

"Hebrew roots, as known to most,
Do flourish best on barren ground."

There is a very drying influence in the classics, and there is a very drying influence in mathematics, and you may get absorbed in any science till your heart is gone. Do not let that be the case with any of you, so that people should have to say of you, "He knows much more than he did when he first came amongst us, but he has not as much spirituality as he used to have." Take care that it never is so. Do not be satisfied with merely polishing up your grates, but stir the fire in your heart, and get your own soul all aflame with love to Christ, or else you will not be likely to be greatly used in the winning of souls of others.

Lastly, brethren, I think that *those sermons which have been prayed over are the most likely to convert people*. I mean those discourses that have had much real prayer offered over them, both in the preparation and the delivery, for there is much so-called prayer that is only playing at praying. I rode, some time ago, with a man who professes to work wonderful cures by the acids of a certain wood. After he had told me about his marvellous remedy, I asked him, "What is there in that to effect such cures as you profess to have wrought?" "Oh!" he answered, "it is the way in which I prepare it, much more than the stuff itself; that is the secret of its curative properties. I rub it as hard as ever I can for a long while, and I have so much vital electricity in me that I put my very life into it." Well, well, he was only a quack, yet we may learn a lesson even from him, for the way to make sermons is to work vital electricity into them, putting your own life and the very life of God into them by earnest prayer. The difference between a sermon that has been prayed over and one that has been prepared and preached by a prayerless man is like the difference that Mr. Fergusson suggested in his prayer when he referred to the high priest before and

after his anointing. You must anoint your sermons, brethren, and you cannot do it except by much private communion with God. May the Holy Spirit anoint every one of you, and richly bless you in winning souls, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.