

# THE SOUL-WINNER;

OR,

HOW TO LEAD SINNERS TO THE SAVIOUR.

BY C. H. SPURGEON

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

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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

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

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

## THE COST OF BEING A SOUL- WINNER.

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I want to say a word to you who are trying to bring souls to Jesus. You long and pray to be useful: do you know what this involves? Are you sure that you do? Prepare yourselves, then, to see and suffer many things with which you would rather be unacquainted. Experiences which would be unnecessary to you personally will become your portion, if the Lord uses you for the salvation of others. An ordinary person may rest in his bed all night, but a surgeon will be called up at all hours; a farming man may take his ease at his fireside, but if he becomes a shepherd he must be out among the lambs, and bear all weathers for them; even so doth Paul say, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." For this cause we shall be made to undergo experiences which will surprise us.

Some years ago, I was the subject of fearful depression of spirit. Certain troublous events had happened to me; I was also unwell, and my heart sank within me. Out of the depths I was forced to cry unto the Lord. Just before I went away to Mentone for rest, I suffered greatly in body, but far more in soul, for my spirit was overwhelmed. Under this pressure, I preached a sermon from the words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" I was as much qualified to preach from that text as ever I expect to be; indeed, I hope that few of my brethren could have entered so deeply into those heart-breaking words. I felt to the full of my measure the horror of a soul forsaken of God. Now, that was not a desirable experience. I tremble at the bare idea of passing again through that eclipse of soul; I pray that I may never suffer in that fashion again unless the same result should hang upon it.

That night, after sermon, there came into the vestry a man who was as nearly insane as he could be to be out of an asylum. His eyes seemed ready to start from his head, and he said that he should utterly have despaired if he had not heard that discourse, which had made him feel that there was one man alive who understood his feeling, and could describe his experience. I talked with him, and tried to encourage him, and asked him to come again on Monday night, when I should have a little more time to talk with him. I saw the brother again, and I told him that I thought he was a hopeful patient, and I was glad that the word had been so suited to his case. Apparently, he put aside the comfort which I presented for his acceptance, and yet I had the consciousness upon me that the precious truth which he had heard was at work upon his mind, and that the storm of his soul would soon subside into a deep calm.

Now hear the sequel. Last night, of all the times in the year, when, strange to say, I was preaching from the words, "The Almighty hath vexed my soul,"

after the service, in walked this self-same brother who had called on me five years before. This time he looked as different as noonday from midnight, or as life from death. I said to him, "I am glad to see you, for I have often thought about you, and wondered whether you were brought into perfect peace." I told you that I went to Mentone, and my patient also went into the country, so that we had not met for five years. To my enquiries, this brother replied, "Yes, you said I was a hopeful patient, and I am sure you will be glad to know that I have walked in the sunlight from that day till now. Everything is changed and altered with me." Dear friends, as soon as I saw my poor despairing patient the first time, I blessed God that my fearful experience had prepared me to sympathise with him and guide him; but last night, when I saw him perfectly restored, my heart overflowed with gratitude to God for my former sorrowful feelings. I would go into the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit: it is good for me to have been afflicted that I might know how to speak a word in season to one that is weary.

Suppose that, by some painful operation, you could have your right arm made a little longer, I do not suppose you would care to undergo the operation; but if you foresaw that, by undergoing the pain, you would be enabled to reach and save drowning men who else would sink before your eyes, I think you would willingly bear the agony, and pay a heavy fee to the surgeon to be thus qualified for the rescue of your fellows. Reckon, then, that to acquire soul-winning power you will have to go through fire and water, through doubt and despair, through mental torment and soul distress. It will not, of course, be the same with you all, nor perhaps with any two of you, but according to the work allotted you, will be your preparation. You must go into the fire if you are to pull others out of it, and you will have to dive into the floods if you are to draw others out of the water. You cannot work a fire-escape without feeling the scorch of the conflagration, nor man a lifeboat without being covered with the waves. If Joseph is to preserve his brethren alive, he must himself go down into Egypt; if Moses is to lead the people through the wilderness, he must first himself spend forty years there with his flock. Payson truly said, "If anyone asks to be made a successful minister, he knows not what he asks; and it becomes him to consider whether he can drink deeply of Christ's bitter cup and be baptized with His baptism."

I was led to think of this by the prayer which has just been offered by our esteemed brother, Mr. Levinsohn. He is, as you perceive, of the seed of Abraham, and he owed his conversion to a city missionary of his own nation. If that city missionary had not himself been a Jew, he would not have known the heart of the young stranger, nor have won his ear for the gospel message. Men are usually won to Christ by *suitable* instruments, and this suitability often lies in the power to sympathize. A key opens a door because it fits the wards of the lock; an earnest address touches the heart because it meets the state of that heart.

You and I have to be made into all sorts of shapes to suit all forms of mind and heart; just as Paul says, “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 to 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.” These processes must be wrought out upon us also. Let us cheerfully bear whatever the Holy Spirit shall work within our spirits that we may thus be the more largely blest to our fellow-men. Come, brethren, and lay your all on the altar! Give yourselves up, you workers, into the Lord’s hand. You who have delicacy and refinement, may have to be shocked into the power to benefit the coarse and ignorant. You who are wise and educated may have to be made fools of, that you may win fools to Jesus; for fools need saving, and many of them will not be saved except by means which men of culture cannot admire.

How finely some people go to work when the thing needed may not be daintiness, but energy! On the other hand, how violent some are when the desired thing is tact and gentleness, and not force! This has to be learned; we must be trained to it as dogs to follow game. Here is one form of experience: The brother is elegant; he wishes to speak earnestly, but he must be elaborate, too. He has written out a nicely-prepared address, his notes are carefully arranged. Alas! he has left the priceless document at home! What will he do? He is too gracious to give up: he will try to speak. He begins nicely, and gets through firstly. “Fair and softly, good sir.” What comes next? See, he is gazing aloft for secondly. What should be said? What can be said? The good man flounders about, but he cannot swim; he struggles to land, and as he rises from the flood you can hear him mentally saying, “That’s my last attempt.” Yet it is not so. He speaks again. He gathers confidence; he grows into an impressive speaker. By such humiliations as these the Lord prepares him to do his work efficiently. In our beginnings we are too fine to be fit, or too great to be good. We must serve an apprenticeship, and thus learn our trade. A black lead pencil is of no use at all till it is cut; the fine cedar wood must be cut away; and then the inward metal which marks and writes will have fair play. Brethren, the knife of affliction is sharp, but salutary; you cannot delight in it, but faith may teach you to value it. Are you not willing to pass through every ordeal if by any means you may save some? If this be not your spirit, you had better keep to your farm and to your merchandise, for no man will ever win a soul who is not prepared to suffer everything within the compass of possibility for that soul’s sake.

A good deal may have to be suffered through fear, and yet that fear may assist in stirring the soul, and putting it into fit posture for work; at least, it may drive the heart to prayer, and that alone is a great part of the necessary preparation. A good man thus describes one of his early attempts at visiting, with the

view of speaking to individuals upon their spiritual condition: "I was thinking, on the way to the residence of the party, how I would introduce the subject, and all that I would say. And all the while I was trembling and agitated. Reaching the door, it seemed as if I should sink through the stones; my courage was gone, and, lifting my hand to the knocker, it dropped at my side without touching it. I went partly down the steps from sheer fear; a moment's reflection sent me again to the knocker, and I entered the house. The sentences I uttered and the prayer offered were very broken; but thankful, very thankful, I am that my fears and cowardice did not prevail. The 'ice was broken.'" That process of ice-breaking must be gone through, and its result is highly beneficial.

O, poor souls, you that wish to find the Saviour, Jesus has died for you; and now His people live for you! We cannot offer any atoning sacrifice for you; there is no need that we should; but still we would gladly make sacrifices for your soul's sake. Did you not hear what our brother said just now in his prayer: We would do anything, be anything, give anything, and suffer anything if we might but bring you to Christ? I assure you that many of us feel even so. Will you not care for yourselves? Shall *we* be earnest about your souls, and will you trifle them away? Be wiser, I beseech you, and may infinite wisdom at once lead you to our dear Saviour's feet. Amen.