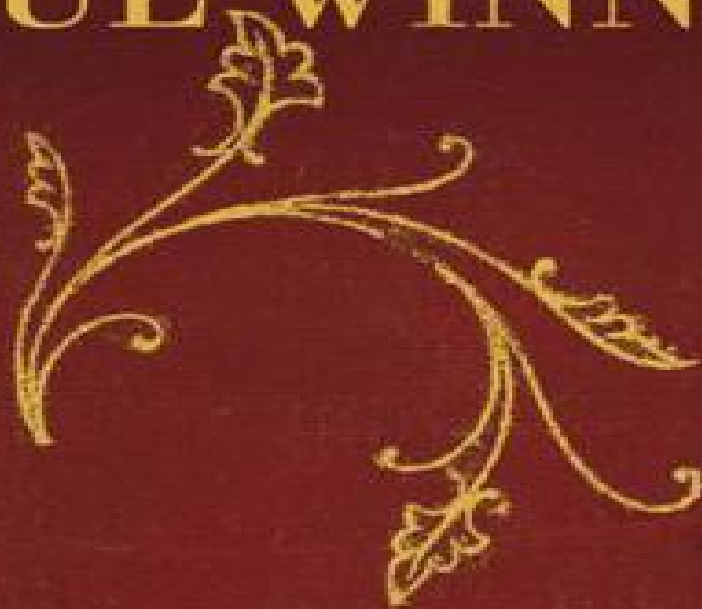




THE SECRET OF
SOUL WINNING



STEPHEN OLFORD
WITH DAVID OLFORD



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SOUL WINNING



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STEPHEN OLFORD
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*Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.*

Daniel 12:3

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Dr. Stephen F. Olford

March 29, 1918–August 29, 2004



DR. STEPHEN OLFORD WAS the founder of Olford Ministries International and the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching. He was best known for his expository preaching and pastoral leadership.

Stephen Olford was raised in Angola, the son of missionaries Frederick and Bessie Olford. In Angola he committed his life to Christ and witnessed firsthand the transforming power of God and His Word.

Stephen spent his college years in the United Kingdom. A crisis experience led to his full surrender to the Lord and his call into the ministry. After receiving ministry training, Dr. Olford was appointed an Army Scripture Reader during World War II. Later he launched a Young People's Christian Fellowship in Newport, South Wales. After the war, Dr. Olford was involved in extensive evangelistic and preaching ministry throughout the UK and overseas.

In 1953, Dr. Olford's years of pastoral ministry began by serving Duke Street Baptist Church in Richmond, Surrey, England (1953–1959) and then Calvary Baptist Church in New York City (1959–1973). He pioneered a Christian TV program, *Encounter*, in New York; and his Sunday morning services were broadcast around the world on radio.

Already ministering to preachers through his extensive teaching, preaching, and writing ministry, Stephen Olford established the Institute for

Biblical Preaching in 1980. Dr. and Mrs. Olford, along with their son David, moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1985 to develop a training center that would equip and encourage preachers and teachers of God's Word. In 1988, the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching was dedicated in Memphis.

Dr. Stephen Olford was recognized nationally and internationally for his powerful exposition of Scripture and his Christ-centered ministry. In recent years he was known as a mentor and model to thousands of preachers, teachers, and pastors in the United States and around the world. Dr. Olford received numerous awards, honorary degrees, and distinctions. As an ordained Baptist minister and a conservative evangelical, he ministered across many denominational, cultural, and racial lines. In addition to his extensive preaching ministry, Dr. Olford authored numerous books and preaching resources.

Dr. Olford's influence on thousands of pastors and preachers cannot be measured. He has had a significant role in the lives of many, including his longtime friend, Dr. Billy Graham. He has been called "The Preacher's Preacher."

Dr. Stephen Olford went home to be with the Lord August 29, 2004. He was a beloved evangelist, pastor, teacher, preacher, leader, mentor, and friend. He was also a loving father, husband, grandfather, and family man in every sense of the word. Dr. Olford and his wife, Heather, were married for fifty-six years. They have two sons: Dr. Jonathan Olford and his wife, Catherine (three sons), and Dr. David Olford and his wife, Ellen (two daughters).

To learn more about Stephen Olford, please read *The Life and Legacy of Stephen Olford* by John Phillips (Olford Ministries International, 2006).

Foreword

BY BILLY GRAHAM

ONCE WHEN LORD TENNYSON was on vacation in a country village, he asked an old Methodist woman, “Is there any news?”

“Well,” she replied, “there is only one piece of news that I know, and that is that Christ died for my sins.”

Tennyson responded, “That is old news, and good news, and new news.”

The chief duty and privilege of the Christian is soul-winning. The Scriptures say, “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide [atone for] a multitude of sins” (James 5:20 KJV).

There are many preachers but few soul-winners. There are many books of sermons but few on soul-winning. In looking through the books in my library, I find many books on doctrine, Christian ethics, and homiletics; but I can count the books on soul-winning on one hand. Perhaps this neglect of the Christian's prime business is one of the causes of the church's failure to capture more men and women for Christ.

John Wesley said to his students, “You have only one business, and that is the salvation of souls.”

David Brainerd at the close of his life wrote in his diary, “I cared not how I lived nor what hardships I went through if I only might gain souls for Christ.”

Professor Smeaton of Edinburgh used to say to his students, “Gentlemen, reckon your ministry a failure unless souls are won to Christ.”

In a day when sects are thriving because their adherents dare to take their message directly to the people, the church must regain the urgency and compulsion of soul-winning, or we fight a losing battle for the minds and

hearts of men.

Dr. Stephen Olford...is eminently qualified to give us helpful instruction in the art of soul-winning. Stephen Olford is not only one of the greatest Bible preachers I know but one of the most successful soul-winners I have ever met. I have been in close contact with Dr. Olford for years. We have ministered together on three continents. He is unquestionably one of the most refreshingly radiant Christians I know. He exemplifies in his personal life everything the apostle Paul meant when he spoke of the “fruit of the Spirit.” He is also a man of great compassion, carrying a burden for the lost.

In this volume Stephen Olford not only tells us what soul-winning is, but he comes directly to the point and tells us how to perform this greatest of all Christian duties.

From a heart that has been strangely and wonderfully warmed by the Spirit of God, he brings us practical suggestions about how to win men to Christ.

I am confident that no one can prayerfully read this book without being a better Christian and without being adequately equipped to convert “the sinner from the error of his way,” and to save souls from death by the help of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

—Billy Graham

Foreword

BY ADRIAN ROGERS

THE BIBLE SAYS THAT the soul-winner is wise. That being so, Stephen Olford was a man greatly endowed with wisdom.

This volume pulsates with holy fire, biblical truth, and spiritual motivation. In my own ministry I have borrowed heavily from it and shared its insights with others in my preaching and personal ministry.

Stephen Olford did not merely practice what he preached, but he preached what he practiced. This volume is not the result of a philosopher sitting behind his desk, nor is it the findings of a scholar who has gathered up materials.

Indeed, Stephen Olford was a philosopher and a biblical scholar in an incomparable way—albeit, this particular volume is more than philosophy and scholarship. It comes from a loving heart of a practical soul-winner who has left a remarkable record behind him.

Like all of Stephen Olford's materials, the preacher and the teacher will have much to feed on and to reproduce in his own way. However, one need not be a preacher or teacher in the classical sense to be blessed by this book.

The heartbeat of the Bible is that Jesus Christ would be glorified. In my estimation one of the most significant ways that we glorify Him is to bring precious souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel to lay at His feet.

I have known Stephen Olford through the years. I have never been in his presence without walking away enriched. His mind was honed to precision. His personal presence and power were electrifying. His wit and personality were engaging.

Does the reader think that I am exaggerating? If so, ask others who have known Stephen Olford and have been blessed by him.

My prayer is that this book will have wide distribution and that the reader will not only treasure his copy but will want other copies to distribute to his friends and acquaintances.

God is love. Jesus is wonderful. Stephen Olford believed that.

—Adrian Rogers

Preface

WE WANT TO EXPRESS our sincere appreciation to our friends and colleagues at B&H Publishing Group for making available to a new readership this revised edition of *The Secret of Soul-Winning*. This book presents the biblical principles and the personal passion that were so much a part of my father's life and ministry. For many years *The Secret of Soul-Winning* has blessed readers, and its message is needed afresh today. God still loves the world. The Great Commission still stands. People outside of Christ are still lost. The gospel still needs to be preached. Jesus still saves!

Most of the original content of the book remains the same. Edits have been made along the way, a chapter entitled “The Soul-Winner's Truth” has been added, and each chapter now concludes with questions for further thought, discussion, and response. A few other additions are included as well. Of most importance is the new foreword by the late Dr. Adrian Rogers. This has been added to the original foreword by Dr. Billy Graham. Both Dr. Graham and Dr. Rogers were faithful friends of my father, and they shared the same zeal for evangelism and soul-winning. We are honored to have these two forewords in the book.

It is our hope and prayer that this revised edition of *The Secret of Soul-Winning* will encourage, instruct, and challenge you to be available to the Lord Jesus so that He might do His soul-winning through you. This is not a passive availability. We are called to “go,” and we are called to “be witnesses.” But it is our conviction and the thrust of this book that the living Lord Jesus resides in the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He works through the believer. Paul would only “boast” in what Christ did through him (Rom. 15:18), and likewise we need to recognize, rely on, and rejoice in what Christ does in and through our lives. Witnessing is not only

talking about the grace of God but also allowing yourself to be a channel through which the grace of God can work.

Special thanks are due to Anita Bosley for her careful and detailed work as editorial assistant on this project. Much work has been done to prepare this book for publication. I also want to thank Linda Barnes, Dr. Ernie Frey, and Dr. Ted Rendall for their help at different points in the project. Last, and on behalf of all the Olford family, thank you for your interest and your investment of time in this book. May this revised edition of *The Secret of Soul-Winning* bear fruit in and through the lives of many.

—David L. Olford

Introduction

DOES THE SUBJECT OF personal soul-winning frighten you? If it does, you have my sympathy! I say that because I know from experience what you are going through. There was a time in my life when even the thought of talking to people, publicly or privately, paralyzed me with fear. I was not only painfully shy by nature but also hopelessly indisposed to meeting new faces. Many a social occasion in our home was spoiled because of my unannounced disappearance!

The fact that I was a committed Christian did not seem to make much difference. In one sense it made me worse. As a saved person, I knew it was my duty to witness for my Lord and, when possible, seek to win others to Him. But such a sense of duty only brought me into inner bondage. I have known what it is to gather up my courage and walk the entire length of a train, giving out gospel booklets to anyone who was courteous enough (and, I often thought, pitying enough) to take a copy. But was I ever glad when such a task was completed.

It was not as if I had not read books on soul-winning. As it happened, I had a wide selection of works on the subject, and often I perused them in the hope of finding the secret to successful soul-winning.

Then God graciously stepped in. He had permitted me to struggle on long enough to convince me that I could do nothing about it. I was shy; I was bound; and I was defeated. In a word, I was a failure.

Then divinely ordered circumstances were used to bring me out of the bondage of soul-winning *in the flesh* and into the blessing of soul-winning *in the Spirit*.

An old friend of mine whom I had not seen for years unexpectedly crossed my path. In the course of conversation, he drew my attention to an

incident in the life of the saintly Oswald Chambers. Only a youth at the time, Chambers was out for a walk with a deeply taught Scottish saint. Presently, a shepherd appeared from around the mountain track and would have passed the two gentlemen with little more than a word of greeting but for the intervention of Oswald. Leaving his senior friend and stepping up to the shepherd, young Chambers pointedly asked the stranger if all were well with his soul! On the face of it, this seemed an opportunity redeemed and a witness nobly given. But on rejoining the man of God, Oswald Chambers was met with this solemn question: “Tell me, did you get the permission of the Holy Ghost to speak to that man about his soul's welfare?”

That story started me thinking. I began to see slowly but clearly that *soul-winning is God's work*. From start to finish He must plan and carry it through. My business is to be in line with His will. Winning men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ is not a matter of trial and error but of being led by the Holy Spirit. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

Shortly after this, I was at a Deeper Life Convention. A much-used servant of God was expounding John 7:37–39 (KJV). Something he said arrested me. As nearly as I can remember, these were his words:

There is only one successful Soul-Winner and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. To try to copy Him is to fail miserably; for His thoughts are not our thoughts; neither are His ways our ways. If we would succeed in this great task of winning the lost to God, then Jesus must work in us and through us, by the power of His Spirit. Listen to His own words: “He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But, this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” Only as we believe *in* Him and allow Him to flow through us by His Spirit will men and women whom *He is drawing to Himself respond*. To the Spiritled child of God, this will mean liberty, joy, and

blessing in the work of personal evangelism.

That evening I went home determined to cease trying and to start trusting. From that moment soul-winning for me has been different. Not only have I been delivered from shyness and self-consciousness, but I have been introduced to a level of soul-winning that is divinely directed and unspeakably joyous.

I have failed since, many times; but always I have known the reason and the way of restoration. The Lord Jesus is the only successful Soul-Winner, and it is only when He is in complete control of my life that I can hope to share in the fruits of His labors.

Such surrender to His sovereignty does not necessarily imply or guarantee on-the-spot decisions for Christ every time a person is approached on the subject! We certainly are called upon to preach the gospel to every creature; but the Lord adds to His church only “those who [are] being saved” (Acts 2:47). This is a deep mystery, but it is a fact of Scripture and of personal experience.

What happens is, that as we witness in the power of the Spirit to all and sundry, some soul is especially laid upon our hearts. Like Philip of old, we are bidden (inwardly) to “go near, and join” (Acts 8:29 KJV) ourselves to this person. Sometimes this results at once in a conversion. Then there are other occasions when the honor is reserved for someone else. In either instance, however, the issue from the divine standpoint is certain and successful. What matters supremely is that we are “led by the Spirit of God” (Rom. 8:14).

“What about the person who rejects the gospel?” someone asks. The answer to that question is treated in the chapter entitled “The Soul-Winner's Triumphs.” Suffice it to say here that how a man or woman finally reacts to the offer of Christ is none of our business. Providing we have witnessed as faithfully as we know how and have given the individual concerned every opportunity to trust the Savior, then, to be sensitive to the divine leading, we must go no further. It is God's work, and He will be glorified in the ultimate issue. Such an attitude ever keeps the Spirit-filled worker humble, prayerful,

and increasingly aware of the fact that he is only an instrument to be used as and when the Master pleases.

This, then, is my testimony to God's dealing with me. The studies that follow are but an amplification and development of this testimony. The principles outlined have been tried and proved; therefore, they are commended with the prayer that they may be used to lead many into the liberty and joy of successful soul-winning.

These studies are by no means exhaustive; rather, they are intended to be suggestive. For this reason no attempt has been made to provide the student with ready-made answers to the problem questions that inevitably arise in the task of evangelism. Another deliberate omission is a table of biblical texts dealing with doctrines and questions that the soul-winner will have to face at one time or another. Stock answers and proof texts are adequately covered by books and courses that have been written for that purpose and are obtainable from most evangelical publishers. Please refer to the back sections of this book for further recommended reading.

As I have implied already in an earlier paragraph, this course of simple studies has a twofold purpose: first, that of bringing all soul-winners to feel their solemn sense of responsibility to God and to the men and women they are seeking to win; and second, that of leading those same soul-winners into the joyous secret of moment-by-moment availability to God for the outworking of His saving plan in a world that desperately needs the gospel. If this purpose is realized in the lives of Christian workers, I know that God will be glorified; the Lord Jesus will be magnified; and I shall certainly be satisfied!

—Stephen F. Olford

CHAPTER ONE



The Successful Soul-Winner

Scriptures for Study

And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? “—that they might accuse Him.

Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

“Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,

*My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.
He will not quarrel nor cry out,
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench,
Till He sends forth justice to victory;
And in His name Gentiles will trust.”*

MATTHEW 12:10-21

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST is our supreme Example in the ministry of soul-winning, as indeed He is in every other aspect of Christian life and service. We cannot study His life without being impressed with the qualifications that marked Him out as the wise Winner of souls. From the manward aspect of His life and work, soul-winning was His first concern. He could say, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

And again, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).

The apostle Paul later could add, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

When He taught men and women, it was with the studied object of bringing them into right relationship to God. When He healed the sick, it was in order to prepare their hearts for the experience of His forgiveness and pardon. It was just the same when He fed the crowds. The motive behind it all was to win them to Himself, as Savior and Shepherd. The consuming passion of His soul was to seek and to save that which was lost. In every sense of the word, He was the successful Soul-Winner.

If we would be successful in soul-winning, we must study Him until the characteristics and spirit that marked and motivated His life are reproduced in us.

With this in mind, we wish to draw your attention to a word portrait of the perfect Soul-Winner, as given in the “Scriptures for Study.” While this passage includes a quotation from the Old Testament (Isa. 42:1–4), which in some senses is prophetic of a day to come, it is at the same time a remarkable disclosure of God's perfect Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore an abiding pattern for us.

It is important to observe that the context in which these verses are set is one of hatred, antagonism, and hostility. The Lord Jesus had just healed a man with a withered hand, with the evident intention of winning him to God. This at once aroused bitter opposition, insomuch that the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him to discuss how they might destroy Him (v. 14).

Then follows this remarkable description of God's perfect Servant. The lesson is obvious. As soul-winners we shall ever be opposed by Satan's fierce attacks. He will never release his victims easily. Because of this we dare not be anything less than Christlike in our reactions, or we cease to be true soul-winners.

What, then, are the characteristics of the soul-winner? Let us turn again to Matthew 12:18–21 and notice what is said of the Lord Jesus. God sets Him forth with the words, “Behold! My Servant.”

Consider these characteristics of the Servant of the Lord:

His Appointment

“Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen” (Matt. 12:18).

All true soul-winners are divinely appointed. In the counsels of eternity, the Lord Jesus was appointed to be the Seeker and Savior of men. So He came forth from the Father's side, saying, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:7–8; compare Heb. 10:7, 9).

What was true of the Lord Jesus applies also to us. We cannot engage in this soul-winning work unless we have been divinely called and chosen.

Having called Peter, James, John, and the rest, Jesus later could say to them, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16).

If we have heard His “come unto Me,” then we must not be deaf to His “go.” His word is clear: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20).

And again, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8).

While these words were spoken initially to the eleven disciples, the New Testament makes plain that their application extends to Christian men and women of all time (see Eph. 4:7–12 and 2 Tim. 2:2). The common notion that soul-winning is the exclusive work of full-time ministers of the gospel is erroneous. The apostle Paul states clearly that the gift of the evangelist in Christ's church is “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry [or serving]” (Eph. 4:12). In other words, the motto and mission of every local church should be “Every Member Evangelism.” Note how the early disciples, having been scattered abroad because of persecution, “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1, 4); or, as the phrase has been freely rendered, “gossiping the gospel.”

His Approbation

“Behold!...My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased” (Matt. 12:18).

Before a life can be a power for God, it must be a pleasure to God. This was always true of our Savior, as evidenced by the Father's words of approval at the baptism and transfiguration of His well-beloved Son (see Matt. 3:17;

17:5). We can merit that approval only by complete submission to the Father's will. The Master could say, "I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

Let us never forget that the will of God is the salvation and sanctification of men and women (see 1 Tim. 2:3–4 and 1 Thess. 4:3). When Jesus "needed to go through Samaria" (John 4:4) to win a sinful woman to God, He could explain His action in the following words: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

No wonder He merited the Father's pleasure!

His Anointing

"Behold! My Servant... . I will put My Spirit upon Him" (Matt. 12:18).

This is the anointing for service and soul-winning. It is important to recognize that there was never a moment in our Lord's experience when He was not full of the Holy Spirit. John declares, "God does not give the Spirit by measure" (John 3:34).

At the same time, while He knew the fullness of the Holy Spirit from birth, it was not until His public ministry that He experienced the anointing of the Spirit. As He stepped out of Jordan after His baptism, the Spirit came upon Him like a dove (Matt. 3:16). Later, referring to this, He could testify, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

To be successful soul-winners, we too must know not only the fullness of the Holy Spirit but also this holy anointing. After Calvary, Jesus told His disciples that this anointing was the promise of the Father and that they were to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

The word *endue* is one of rich significance. The original meaning carries the thought of being invested or clothed upon with a new power. After Pentecost the disciples were to wear this power like a garment.

While this clothing with power took place simultaneously with the baptism, the two must not be confused. Baptism was an *immersion* in the Spirit, while the clothing with power was an *investment* of the Spirit. Baptism was initial and final (1 Cor. 12:13) while the clothing with power was initial and continual. This continual clothing with power is the result of a life of *prayerfulness* (Acts 1:14; 2:4) and *yieldedness* (Acts 5:32).

The *anointing* of the Spirit has to do particularly with service or responsibility while the *baptism* has to do with sainthood or relationship. Later, when expanding the thought of this clothing with power, Jesus said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

As we have seen, the *anointing* must not be confused with the *baptism*; nor must it be regarded as synonymous with the *filling* of the Spirit. While the *baptism* has to do with relationship and the *anointing* with responsibility, the *filling* has to do with realization. The *anointing* represents something outward while *the filling* of the Spirit denotes an inward experience. The *anointing* is for special service while *the filling* is for daily living.

The evidence of the anointing of the Spirit is a *spiritual authority in the work of God* and a spiritual knowledge of the Word of God. In a context where Paul is speaking of the authority of his ministry, he says, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1:21–22).

In the Old Testament the ceremony of anointing was related to all important offices and ministries of the servants of Jehovah. The prophet was anointed that he might be the messenger of God to the people (1 Kings 19:16). The priest was anointed that he might be holy unto the Lord (Lev.

8:12). The king was anointed that the Spirit of the Lord might rest upon him in power (1 Sam. 16:13). No servant of the Lord was considered qualified for his ministry without this holy anointing. Indeed, as we have seen, the Lord Jesus was anointed with the Spirit and with power at the outset of His ministry (see Acts 10:38). So Paul applies this same principle to the believers at Corinth when he reminds them, “He who...has anointed us is God” (2 Cor. 1:21).

The further evidence of the anointing of the Spirit is *spiritual knowledge of the Word of God*. So the apostle John tells us, “The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1 John 2:27).

There is a distinct difference between “the tuition of learning” and “the intuition of the Spirit.” One is intellectual knowledge while the other is spiritual knowledge. While we should never undervalue the former, the Bible puts the weightier emphasis on the latter. “‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God... . No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:9–11).

If the soul-winner would be characterized by such spiritual authority and knowledge, he must know this anointing with the Spirit. Only thus will he be effective in his holy task of faithfully representing the living Christ.

His Announcement

“Behold! My Servant... . He will declare justice to the Gentiles” (Matt. 12:18).

In quoting this Old Testament passage, Matthew anticipates the preaching

of the gospel to the Gentile world after Pentecost.

The word *justice* has a wide range of meanings and includes the thought of “life-giving truths of the righteous Judge.” Our message, in personal conversation or public discourse, must be that of righteousness made available through our Savior, who is just and the Justifier of all who believe in Him (Rom. 3:26).

That master soul-winner, the apostle Paul, could announce, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

His Approach

“Behold! My Servant... . He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench” (Matt. 12:18–20).

These words describe the pervading calmness and composure that characterized our Savior's approach to men in His work of soul-winning. Indeed, His quiet and gentle manner so impressed itself upon the mind of the Evangelist that he could not help but recall Isaiah's prophecy of Him. To Matthew, the Master's approach stood out in marked contrast to the wrangling of the Jewish scribes, the violence of the Roman officers, and even more the ravings of the false prophets and leaders of revolt such as Judas of Galilee. When confronted with broken and smoldering humanity, Jesus was tender with the broken reed and trustful with the smoking flax. This must ever be our approach if we are to succeed as soul-winners.

Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul says, “A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient” (2 Tim. 2:24).

His Assurance

“Behold! My Servant... . He sends forth justice to victory” (Matt. 12:18, 20).

The Lord Jesus was never a pessimist or a defeatist. He was confident of the ultimate victory of God's purpose of grace. This secret assurance gave Him poise and positiveness when dealing with men and women.

Such assurance must also characterize us if we would succeed in the work of soul-winning. True love for souls “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:7).

His Acceptance

“Behold! My Servant... . In His name Gentiles will trust [or hope]” (Matt. 12:18, 21).

The reality and radiance of the Savior's faith called forth hope and trust from sin-stricken humanity. In our contact and conversation with people, we, as soul-winners, must be characterized by a reality and radiance of faith if we would have acceptance with souls who are hungry for God. The early disciples had favor with all the people; therefore, the Lord was able to add to the church daily such as were being saved (see Acts 2:47).

Let us never forget that, while those who refuse the gospel may hate and persecute us, thousands upon thousands of men and women respond at once to Christian reality and radiance when they encounter the good news.

We have seen the sevenfold characteristics of the successful soul-winner. If we had to copy them, what failures we should be! But, thank God, in wisdom and love He has devised a more excellent way: *it is by the power of the Lord Jesus who lives and works in and through us.*

The great apostle knew this secret, for his testimony was, “It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:15–16).

And again, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

And yet again, “We preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” (Col. 1:28–29).

If truly born again, we too have within us the wonderful secret of successful soul-winning. God's perfect Servant and Soul-Winner lives in our heart and longs to express Himself through our lives. Our responsibility is to recognize His indwelling presence and then to reckon on His inexhaustible power. Then we will be able to say with the apostle Paul, “We labor according to His working, which works *in* us mightily” (see Col. 1:29).

For Reflection and Response

1. “The Lord Jesus Christ is our supreme example in the ministry of soul-winning, as indeed He is in every other aspect of life and service.” Take a few moments to reflect on this statement. Write down or discuss some ways we can learn from His example.
2. What is the anointing of the Holy Spirit? How does the anointing of the Holy Spirit relate to your life and witness?
3. How does the fact that Jesus Christ lives in our hearts and longs to express Himself through our lives impact the way we view soul-winning?

CHAPTER TWO



The Soul-Winner's Task

Scriptures for Study

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

MATTHEW 28:18–20

Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything

deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

MARK 16:14–20

NEARLY TWO THOUSAND YEARS ago the risen Lord commissioned His disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). These words, as we observed in the previous chapter, were addressed initially to the eleven disciples who represented the nucleus of the church (see 1 Cor. 15:6).

The task the Savior envisaged for His disciples was the evangelization of the world. The words of that commission have never been withdrawn, and the vision for world evangelization is still as clear as when the Savior first presented it. The question arises as to how far we have fulfilled this task.

“How can such a work be attempted?” someone asks. The answer: by His promised power. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18).

“How can such a work be accomplished?” inquires another. Our Lord replies that it is by His promised program: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20).

“How can such a work be attested?” insists yet another. The word comes back: by His promised presence. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

It is evident therefore, that the soul-winner's task is to:

Go into the World with Christ's Power

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18).

All the powers of heaven, earth, and hell are under the authority of the risen Christ. It follows that to be under His authority is to be brought into the good of that authority. None of us know the full significance of this tremendous fact. If we did, we should be witnessing greater happenings today than anything people saw when Jesus was on earth. The Master Himself stated, “He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

Those first-century soul-winners took these words so seriously that in a little over thirty-three and a half years the whole of the then-known world had been evangelized. They knew that to be brought under the authority of the risen Christ was to be able to:

Direct Divine Power

The Master had already promised them this power when He said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

What is more, the disciples knew the secret of relating this divine power to any person, in any place, at any time. Observe how this is illustrated in the Acts of the Apostles:

Any Person (Acts 3:1–11). Peter and John are confronted here with human need. The man, lame from his mother's womb, is a picture of helpless humanity: “brought forth in iniquity” and conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5). Religion can do little for him, for he is laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order that he may ask alms of those who enter. Stirred with this need, Peter, supported by his fellow worker John, fastens his

eyes upon the man, and with quiet confidence says, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk... . And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:6–8). At the mention of the name of Jesus Christ, divine power was related to human need.

Any Place (Acts 12:1–17). The voice of the gospel has been silenced; Peter is in prison. King Herod, having stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church, had killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; then, because it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also. God's answer to this sinister and subtle attack of the enemy was a fellowship of believers at prayer. Hear Dr. Luke's dramatic words: “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church” (v. 5). Later in the chapter we read, “And his chains fell off his hands” (v. 7). What a demonstration of divine power!

Any Period (Acts 16:16–34). It is midnight, and Paul and Silas are in the inner prison with their feet fast in the stocks. But the record tells us they were “praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed” (vv. 25–26).

It did not matter who it was, where it was, or what it was; the power of the risen Lord was more than adequate. This direction of divine power may or may not be accompanied by similar physical phenomena in our day; but the authority of the Lord Jesus is just the same. He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Those early soul-winners knew, furthermore, that to be under the authority of the risen Christ was to be able to:

Discipline Human Power

They had heard the Master say, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19).

This power of discipline was exercised not only in their personal lives but also in the local church. Indeed, such was the effect of this recognized authority of Christ in the church in Jerusalem that we are told the outside world feared, and “none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly” (Acts 5:13).

Leaders within the church had the divine authority to exercise a discipline that maintained the purity of the Christian community. Study the New Testament story and observe how sin in the church was attacked:

The Sin of Insincerity (Acts 5:3–4). Ananias and Sapphira had agreed to lie to the church regarding their gifts. They had overlooked the solemn fact that in wronging the church they were wronging God. As the representative of the church, Peter detected this and challenged them separately with the words, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?... You have not lied to men but to God” (vv. 3–4). The judgment of God followed, cutting off both these lives, so that “great fear came upon all those who heard these things” (v. 5).

The Sin of Immorality (1 Cor. 5). A Christian had been involved in a scandalous disorder such as was not even named among the Gentiles; and instead of judging this sin, the Corinthian believers were puffed up with pride and had not even mourned. So Paul had to write to them and say: “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (vv. 3–5). And again, “Put away from yourselves the evil person” (v. 13).

Such was the punishment meted out to this offender that Paul had to write at a later date and tell the church at Corinth to receive back into fellowship

the repentant brother, adding, “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man” (2 Cor. 2:6).

The Sin of Infidelity (1 Tim. 1:19–20; 2 Tim. 2:17). Three men named Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus—who had made shipwreck of the faith, teaching erroneously that the resurrection was already past—had to be dealt with by the apostle; and we read that he delivered them to Satan, “that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20).

What solemn discipline was exercised by these men of God in the early church! This corporate expression of such authority is only an evidence of the discipline of human power in the individual lives of these soul-winners.

Their knowledge of divine authority was such that they were able to:

Destroy Satanic Power

These wise warriors of the cross were aware of the strength of the enemy. They recognized that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

But they were also confident that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–5). With certainty and victory in their hearts, they could act on the exhortation of James, “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Such resistance of the devil is dramatically illustrated in Acts 13, where we read that Paul encountered Elymas, the sorcerer, who was set on thwarting the purposes of God in the preaching of the gospel. Faced with this challenge, Paul, “filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?’ ...

And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand” (Acts 13:9–11).

If we would be successful soul-winners, we must always know the authority to destroy satanic power. The apostle John tells us that “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

How wonderful to know that this same Lord Jesus Christ dwells in our hearts by faith and can, therefore, continue to undo the works of the devil through us as we submit ourselves to God and resist the devil!

What a change would come into our personal evangelism if we knew how to direct divine power, discipline human power, and destroy satanic power! What a new sense of our high calling we should have in fulfilling the commission to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15)!

The soul-winner's task, in the second place, is to:

Go into the World with Christ's Program

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19–20).

How simple and sublime is this program! How free from all the externals and complications of ecclesiastical organizations today! You will notice that it is threefold in its demands on the soul-winner.

To start with, the responsibility of the winner of souls is to:

Evangelize People for Christ

“Make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). This is priority number

one. Men and women must be brought face-to-face with the risen Christ. This calls not for education, not for reformation primarily, but for evangelization. Lost sinners must be brought to the place of true repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ before they qualify for church membership or instruction in the deep things of God. There is a moral order here that the soul-winner must ever bear in mind. Religious leaders throughout the centuries have sought to reverse God's order, and only confusion and weakness in the life of the church have followed.

Having evangelized men and women, the soul-winner's plain duty is then to:

Enlist People for Christ

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is the outward sign of association with the universal church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Once a soul-winner has led a man to the Savior, he is responsible to God to see that the young believer is linked to a local church. The New Testament knows nothing of so-called freelance Christianity or church-hopping. Following Peter's sermon and appeal on the day of Pentecost, “Those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41–42).

Recognizing the natural tendency of men and women to neglect their church responsibilities, the writer to the Hebrews exhorts, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:23–25).

Thus we see that the soul-winner's task is first to evangelize people for

Christ, then to enlist them, and next to:

Edify People for Christ

“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). A certain amount of this teaching will be done by the soul-winner himself, but naturally this will be augmented by the teaching ministry of the church.

As we shall see in a later study, the aim of every true soul-winner is to be faithful in “warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

The cause of superficiality and ignorance in the life of the church is generally due to the negligence of this third item in the Savior's program. As a wise winner of souls, the apostle Paul could say when bidding farewell to the elders of Ephesus, “I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). That should be the pattern for every successful soul-winner.

Let us not forget, moreover, that for the fulfillment of this threefold program the Lord Jesus has put His power at our disposal. He never releases power from heaven for personal aggrandizement or public exhibitionism. Without doubt the powerlessness among churches and individual Christians at the present hour is due largely to the fact that we have substituted our own selfish interests and desires for Christ's program.

The task of the soul-winner is not only to go with Christ's power and program but, as we see from the commission, to:

Go into the World with Christ's Presence

“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

Only those who personally or corporately fulfill the evangelistic

commission can enjoy a realization of Christ's presence. If you compare Matthew's account with Mark's, you will notice that the presence of the living Lord means:

Cooperation

“And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them” (Mark 16:20). The apostle Paul reminds us of the power of Christ's unfailing presence with His own: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

Even if men, ministers, or missions are not prepared to acknowledge our work in the name of the Lord, we can always depend on His presence if we go forth at His bidding. There are some pathetic words at the close of Paul's last letter to Timothy. The apostle had been forsaken by all men, but the old warrior had remained faithful, and his testimony in the Roman dungeon was still clear. It transpired that, even in the absence of those who might have supported him, he could confidently declare, “The Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear” (2 Tim. 4:17). What soul-winner can be afraid if he knows that the Lord is working with him?

Confirmation

“The Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20). When we work with Him, He always sees to it that signs follow. Signs may be evidenced by attraction to Christ or by antagonism to Christ. As we watch the perfect Soul-Winner, especially as pictured by the evangelist John, we notice that every time He spoke in private or preached in public, people took sides. They either took up stones to kill Him, or they believed on Him. In a similar way the acid test of effectiveness in our soul-winning is evidenced by the decisive impact we make on

individuals or communities.

Completion

“I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). What we begin with Him, He promises to finish, even after we have gone to heaven. The great apostle was confident of this, that He who had begun a good work would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

What a call this is to aggressive evangelism! And what a cause this is in which to serve! It is a cause that is not temporary but eternal, not of man's devising but belonging to the nature of reality as revealed in Jesus Christ—a cause in which ultimate victory is assured—for its Captain has already broken through the opposing ranks and won the fight.

He bids all true soul-winners to rally under His banner and go into the world with His power, His program, and His presence. Nothing less than this is the task of the successful soul-winner.

For Reflection and Response

1. Should every Christian be a Great Commission Christian? In what sense? What differences would this make in the lives of believers if they thought and lived this way?
2. What does it mean to be “under the authority of the risen Christ”?
3. What manifestations of the devil's power do we face today? How do *you* face them and defeat them?
4. What is Christ's program? How do you, specifically, fit in?

CHAPTER THREE



The Soul-Winner's Training

Scriptures for Study

Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what

every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

EPHESIANS 4:8–16

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:14–17

THE SOUL-WINNER'S TRAINING MUST be viewed as threefold:

Spiritual Training

When the Lord Jesus appointed His twelve disciples to the ministry of soul-winning, “He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14).

You will notice that He did not send them forth at once, even though Andrew and Philip seemed to be natural soul-bringers from the start. For three and a half years the Master trained His men—by instruction, by

discipline, and by example—in order that He might send them forth to be witnesses to Him to the far ends of the earth.

Only by being with the Lord Jesus shall we come to know what is involved in:

The Soul-Winner's Obligation

Romans 1:14–16 reveals how this sense of obligation expressed itself in the life and language of the apostle Paul. He could say, “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

Paul viewed men and women—irrespective of their race, rank, or religion—as his creditors; he was ever restless until his debt to them was fully discharged. His sense of obligation is summed up in three short sentences: “I am a debtor,” “I am ready,” and “I am not ashamed of the gospel.”

Writing to the church at Corinth, he expressed a similar burden when he stated, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16).

Paul had a message that burned within him; and wherever he went, he had to offer Christ to the people. This sense of obligation has characterized all the great soul-winners and evangelists throughout the history of the church. It is said of D. L. Moody that he rarely went to bed a happy man if he had not talked to someone during the day about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Soul-Winner's Education

Addressing future soul-winners, Jesus said, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).

Only by spending time alone with Jesus shall we learn the divine art of

soul-winning. There is no better way of doing this than by reading, studying, and inwardly digesting the four Gospels. In examining the interviews recorded, especially by Matthew (some sixteen) and John (some seventeen), we may learn that:

Soul-winning is a priority work for every Christian. As the master Soul-Winner, the Lord Jesus could declare, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). That was His supreme passion, to seek and to save the individual. A vivid illustration of His thought and care is given in the story that John records in his Gospel, chapter 4. No one can read those opening verses without being impressed with the little word *must*: “He must needs go through Samaria” (v. 4 KJV). The seeking and saving of this lost soul was a divine imperative even though it meant a detour of some miles and involved weariness, hunger, and thirst. It was a priority item in His program for that day.

The Master was possessed by a sense of being sent, or commissioned, to bring men and women to God. Before He left His disciples to go to heaven, He said to them, as He says to us today, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

Soul-winning is a perennial work for every Christian. Writing to Timothy, Paul exhorted him to “preach the word; be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2 KJV). How often this phrase is quoted, “Be instant in season, [and] out of season.” In point of fact, however, there is no *and* in this injunction. The whole point of the apostle's command is to show that there is no “out of season” time for the true soul-winner. The sense implicit in the words is this: “Take opportunity or make it.” Formal preaching may have to be restricted to a traditional program, but witnessing and soul-winning are a responsibility to which we are committed at any time of day or night.

Nicodemus could go and find the Lord Jesus available and ready to speak to him in the night watches; the woman of Samaria met Jesus at noonday when most people would be seeking the shade of their homes. Our Christian witness and soul-winning should be “like a tree planted by the rivers of

water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Ps. 1:3). God make us evergreen trees and perennial fruit bearers.

Soul-winning is a productive work for every Christian. We are commissioned to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). No other method reaches *all* classes. Anyone knows that there are some people who will never be reached except through personal contact. In the normal course of events, they would not attend a church service or an evangelistic rally; yet they are souls for whom Christ died.

What is more, personal work always produces the best results. There is no comparison between what may be accomplished through public preaching and personal soul-winning.

Preaching might be likened to shaking a tree in order to harvest the fruit. The fruit falls all right, but so often with resultant bruising and damage. Personal soul-winning, on the other hand, is like taking a ladder and climbing into the tree to reach and pick the fruit carefully and successfully.

Have you ever thought of the difference it would make to the true church if every Christian won three souls to Christ each year? Consider this mathematically for a moment. If there were only five thousand Christians in the world and each one led three souls to Christ in a year (and each succeeding year) and also taught the converts to do the same, in one year there would be twenty thousand Christians; in nine years there would be over one thousand million; and in ten years the whole of the known world would be evangelized!

Such, then, are some of the lessons that emerge as we learn of Christ, the successful Soul-Winner.

The Soul-Winner's Motivation

Fellowship with the Lord Jesus in the ministry of soul-winning begets in us:

A True Concern for Souls. We have already observed something of the Savior's interest in and concern for individual men and women. Perhaps the most telling picture He gives of Himself is that of the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep. "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray" (Matt. 18:12–13).

With the concern for souls, fellowship with the Master begets In us:

A True Compassion for Souls. We read that "when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). It is not sufficient to have a sense of obligation. There must be a spirit of motivation. Only the love of Christ can constrain us, that is, press us into action, narrow us down to irresistible and inescapable obedience (2 Cor. 5:14).

The Soul-Winner's Operation

The Master's soul-winning operations were always God planned and Spirit controlled, and ours should be as well if we are to know anything of the conscious fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Only when the Spirit of God operates within us can we know:

The Contact That Is Planned by God. We are told that "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). If only we knew this leading of the Spirit more often and more deeply, we should never make the tragic mistakes in our work of soul-winning. While we are to be "instant in season, out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2 KJV) in all our work of personal evangelism, this in no way implies indiscriminate approaches to unprepared men and women. Not for one moment do we imagine that our Lord's contacts were indiscriminate and unprepared. He, who was so led by the Spirit of God, was always making contacts that were planned in heaven. To discover this

secret is to be delivered from the bondage and boredom of unsuccessful soul-winning in the energy of the flesh and be brought into the blessing of God-planned contacts that ultimately lead to conversions.

The Conversation That Is Prepared by God. If we are led by the Spirit of God, then it follows that we shall know the liberty of the Holy Spirit, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). How often this is illustrated throughout the New Testament! Paul tells us that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be able to speak, sing, and submit (Eph. 5:18–21)! Peter and the rest of the disciples could pray and even minister the Word of God to one another, but they were incapable of witnessing and soul-winning until they were full of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1–2). The secret of liberated conversation is the conscious fullness of the Holy Spirit.

The Conviction That Is Produced by God. This point is vital. Before the Lord Jesus left His disciples, He said, “If I depart, I will send Him [the Comforter] to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:7–11).

Many Christians fail to realize that the Holy Spirit operates through God's people in this work of conviction. This is true in individual work, as well as in the corporate witness of the church. When the Holy Spirit fills our lives, magnifying and glorifying the Lord Jesus in our mortal bodies, the outside world becomes aware of the damning sin of unbelief.

The Conversion That Is Purposed by God. In the early church “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). No conversion happens by chance. The whole movement is divinely controlled. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44).

What a holy joy and privilege to be caught up in this redemptive purpose and to cooperate with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in a work of genuine conversion!

This, then, is the soul-winner's operation: contact, then conversation, followed by conviction, consummating in conversion—all governed by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The Soul-Winner's Intercession

Prayer should precede, accompany, and follow every phase of this holy task of winning men and women to a personal knowledge of Christ.

As we shall see in a future study, only by our travailing in prayer can souls be born into the family of God. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) might well be the soul-winner's motto. This not only means the *activity* of prayer, as the Christian worker wrestles with God for the salvation of men and women, but the *attitude* of prayer at all times.

When the apostle lays bare his heart concerning his burden for unconverted Israel, he says, “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). Prayerfulness and fruitfulness are inseparable. Let every soul-winner remember that.

Biblical Training

Biblical training should include:

Memorizing the Bible

David could say, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!” (Ps. 119:11).

The value of memorizing the Word of God cannot be overstressed. The soul-winner will be hampered again and again if his memory is not well stored with passages from the Word of God that are likely to be of use to him in leading men and women to a personal knowledge of Christ.

It has now been established by psychologists that memorizing does not depend so much on whether a person, young or old, has a good memory or a bad memory. The secret lies in four simple principles, which can be related to memorizing the Bible, as well as poetry, prose, or anything else.

Concentration. This presupposes interest, desire, discipline, and hard work. Most people who cannot memorize Scripture are not interested and certainly not desirous of doing so. But, given these first two essentials, there must be discipline and hard work of learning by heart such selected passages as will best aid the soul-winner in his task.

Meditation. One of the best ways of impressing the Scriptures upon the mind is the mental exercise known as meditation. It denotes the turning over in the mind of a verse or passage until it is understood and enjoyed. It is easier to remember words that are understood and enjoyed than those that are merely learned in parrot-like fashion.

Repetition. At regular intervals, all passages memorized should be reviewed. By this process of repetition, deeper impressions are made upon the mind.

Application. One more way of assisting the memory to retain what is learned is the personal application of the Word of God. Indeed, only as truth is personally applied does it become to us “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). The Holy Scriptures must live for us if they are to be effective in our ministry of soul-winning.

If and when we have given ourselves wholly to this discipline of memorizing Scriptures—by concentration, meditation, repetition, and application—then, and only then, are we qualified to trust the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance whatsoever God has said to us (see John 14:26).

Marking the Bible

Methods of marking the Bible are numerous. The soul-winner will decide which one serves his purpose best. It is valuable, however, for him to develop

a system of cross-reference marking, to enable him to turn from one subject to another with ease and absence of embarrassment.

To illustrate, a simple method that I have often used, *Seven Steps in God's Way of Salvation*, is listed below. All the soul-winner needs to remember is the first reference; thereafter, by a system of cross-references noted in the margin of his Bible, he can follow through the seven steps, in order, as outlined here:

1. The Need of Salvation (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)
2. The Cost of Salvation (1 Cor. 15:3–4; Rom. 4:25; 5:6–8)
3. The Way of Salvation (Acts 16:31; John 1:12)
4. The Joy of Salvation (Rom. 10:9–10; illustrate with Acts 2:41; 8:37, 39)
5. The Terms of Salvation (Luke 14:26–33)
6. The Act of Salvation (John 1:12; 5:24; Rev. 3:20)
7. The Seal of Salvation (John 10:28–30; Eph. 1:13–14)

Needless to say, for each of these steps, more references might be cited; but these will suffice to show how, by cross-reference marking, any subject or doctrine in the Word of God can be traced out in order of sequence.

Mastering the Bible

One of the dangers of memorizing, or even marking, the Bible is that of acquiring superficial knowledge. Someone has said that a text out of context is a pretext! How often verses or passages of Scripture are quoted to support arguments or doctrines with which they are not even remotely connected!

The soul-winner must study to show himself “approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

This will involve studying (or being diligent):

To Prove the Word of God. One “approved to God,” simply interpreted, means one who has tested and proved the Word of God by trial and

experience; or, in other words, one who has practiced the Word of God to the approval of God. From the general teaching of the Bible, we learn that there are two ways in which the Word of God can be practiced to the approval of God:

- Obediently. Samuel reminds us that “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22; see also Jer. 11:3). Without due attention to this essential, it is perilously easy to find one's self practicing the Word of God selfishly, heretically, or formally.
- Overcomingly. John, writing to young men, says, “You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14). When the Word is practiced obediently, it issues in an overcoming life. How beautifully this is demonstrated in the life of our Lord, who obeyed the Word and overcame by the Word.

There will also be studying:

To Prize the Word of God. “A worker who does not need to be ashamed” (2 Tim. 2:15). This follows in perfect order, for a workman is never ashamed of that which has been tried and proved to be effective in his own life. And so he prizes the Word of God:

- Lovingly. With the psalmist he can say, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps. 119:97).
- Loyalloy. Solomon once wrote, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it” (Prov. 23:23). And later Jude exhorted all true lovers of the Word of God, saying, “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

You can test the measure of your love and loyalty to the Word of God by asking yourself what you have sacrificed for the knowledge of the truth. A man cannot spend time, suffer persecution, stand firm to buy the truth, and then prize it lightly enough to sell it. An unashamed workman will never sell his tools.

Again, there will be studying:

To Preach the Word of God. “Rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Until it is proven and prized, the Bible cannot be preached. The man who knows what it is to work it out in daily life and to prize it above all else will know how rightly to divide the Word of Truth. Paul's expression here carries the thought of preaching the Word:

- Courageously. Bengel “takes Paul to mean that Timothy may *make ready a straight way for* ‘the word of truth,’ and may himself walk straight forward according to this line, turning neither to the right nor to the left.”¹ The preaching of this order must be fearless and courageous. It cannot deviate for anyone or at any cost. The apostle in another way encourages the young man Timothy to be fearless in his preaching, teaching “no other doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3).
- Clearly. Some commentators remark that “rightly dividing” is a metaphor used for “laying out a road,” thus implying a clear pathway to a destination. Such preaching leaves no doubt in the hearer's mind as to the point of truth in view. The Levites of Nehemiah's day were preachers of this kind (see Neh. 8:8).
- Conveniently. There are still others who maintain that the metaphor is that of a father or steward who is cutting and distributing bread at the table. Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, sums up this convenient preaching when he prays, “Feed me with the food allotted to me” (Prov. 30:8). Paul put it another way when he exhorted Timothy to “convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2), according to the specific need.

In order to prove, prize, and preach the Word of God worthily, we must seek not only to master the Bible but also to be mastered by it. Only thus shall we be qualified to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Practical Training

There are three aspects of practical training that must be studied and practiced:

The Art of Presentability

Research on this holy work of winning men and women to Jesus Christ has revealed, to an alarming degree, just how important is the Christian's presentability. It is amazing, as well as serious, how many potential evangelistic contacts with unbelievers are thwarted by the extremes in the Christian's presentability.

On the one hand are those who follow the fashions of the world so closely as to become as sophisticated as the people they are striving to win. The unbeliever expects to see a difference both in a Christian's appearance and in his approach. Then there are those who go to the other extreme of being so careless and frumpish that they lose their opportunity with the outsider.

Appearance, apparel, and approach do matter, even though it might be argued that God can work in spite of these things. Were evidence necessary, it could be proved beyond doubt the importance of such matters as cleanliness, neatness of appearance, and pleasantness of approach.

Writing to Timothy, the experienced apostle Paul exhorts, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). And again, to Titus, "In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you" (Titus 2:7–8).

And in writing to the women, Paul adds, "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9–10).

Let us never forget that we are called upon to "adorn the doctrine of God

our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10). Only as we are Spirit filled will we know the modesty, balance, and presentability that become the gospel we represent.

The Art of Sociability

One of the outstanding characteristics of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ was His sociability. The rich and the poor, the good and the bad, the young and the old were all attracted to Him. Luke tells us that publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him; the Pharisees and scribes unwittingly paid Him a compliment when they murmured saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). Even the Master Himself quotes His enemies when they say of Him, “Look, ... friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Luke 7:34). There was a holy, healthy magnetism about His personality, which drew to Him all who were in need. It is recorded that “they came to Him from every direction” (Mark 1:45).

Conservatism, self-consciousness, and snobbishness are fatal in the work of soul-winning. Nothing less than the outward manifestation of the indwelling attractiveness and friendliness of the Lord Jesus will succeed in personal evangelism. The soul-winner must diligently study and practice the art of sociability. Day-by-day contacts in the home, in the church, and in the business world provide ample opportunity and scope for this. It has been said that if we would win some, we must be Winsome.

The Art of Adaptability

A passage we must return to again and again in these studies is 1 Corinthians 9:19–22. The apostle Paul sums it up when he says “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (v. 22).

We only have to follow this great soul-winner in his evangelistic itineraries to see how he translated these principles into action. For every

changing situation there was a different approach.

The same, of course, is true of the Master Himself. He could adapt Himself in such a way as to take full advantage of every opportunity to preach the good news. He could turn a fishing boat into a pulpit, a well-side into a counseling room, and the everyday happenings around Him into object lessons and topics of soul-winning conversation.

Adaptability presupposes a good grasp of general knowledge and close observation of the ways of men and women in the world. It suggests also alertness and anticipation in the course of one's normal vocations and activities. It is an art that must be cultivated and then employed to the best advantage.

So we have seen what training involves. It behooves the soul-winner to become as proficient as he possibly can in all three aspects—spiritual, biblical, and practical.

Needless to say, no one can ever claim that he has finally arrived or is completely qualified. The whole of life will have to be devoted to the development of knowledge and enrichment of experience in this greatest of all tasks, that of winning men and women to our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Reflection and Response

1. If you were to plan some type of evangelism “training program,” what would it look like? Who would be trained? How? In what ways? How would the program be tested?
2. What has proved to be the most helpful preparation and motivation for soul-winning in your own experience? Why do you think that is the case?
3. If you were to assess your own preparation for soul-winning, how would you evaluate that preparation: (a) spiritually, (b) biblically, and (c) practically? What area(s) need special attention? What steps can be

taken to grow and move forward spiritually, biblically, and/or practically in your own training for soul-winning?

CHAPTER FOUR



The Soul-Winner's Truth

Scriptures for Study

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we

preach and so you believed.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1–11

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

ROMANS 1:16–17

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN the soul-winner, if honest, may be embarrassed or have to admit shame. There may be things in the soul-winner's past that are “things of which [he is] now ashamed” (Rom. 6:21). Furthermore, words said or deeds done by other Christians may have caused sadness at times. Some matters in church history or contemporary church life may cause sorrow or even disgust. Much has been done in the name of the Lord that has brought Him dishonor rather than glory. But, despite these things, *the soul-winner need not be ashamed of the gospel itself*. Indeed, the soul-winner should never be ashamed of the *truth* of the gospel. The truth of the gospel is the basis for genuine confidence, along with deep conviction and joy. Ultimately, truth is on the side of the soul-winner.

The gospel, as presented in God's Word, needs to be voiced by the soul-winner. Other “gospels” out there are really not gospels at all. For instance, a cultural gospel calls people to be the best that society asks for and to do those things that it says are acceptable. A self-help gospel encourages people to build their own lives and destinies through self-improvement. A mystical or New Age gospel calls people to believe in whatever outside forces are in sync with the chosen path. A pluralistic religious gospel seeks to find the common ground between different faiths, helping people climb up the same mountain but on different paths. And a social gospel focuses on the social ethics and implications of biblical truths but may not affirm the importance of belief in

the historic facts and faith revealed in the Scriptures. But none of these “gospels” are the gospel presented in God's inerrant and sufficient Word.

Our purpose in this chapter is to present the core truths of the gospel. The goal is not to present one way of sharing the gospel with others. God may lead in different ways at different times. Our goal in this chapter is to help us appreciate afresh the truth we believe because we have a wonderful and powerful gospel.

The Core of the Gospel

“That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3–4).

The gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is glorious from its core to its circumference. Many words, word pictures, and concepts are used in the New Testament to give us an understanding of what God has done for us through Christ to bring about salvation and eternal life. It will take eternity itself to appreciate the love of God, the greatness of our salvation, and all that took place in order for us to be called “children of God.” The more we are filled with the truths of the gospel, the more we will be equipped to share those truths with urgency, certainty, and dependency on the Holy Spirit. The more we appreciate the truth, the more we can speak with both humility and authority.

It is helpful, in the light of the depth and width of our gospel, to consider what is at the core of the gospel message. Many places in the Scriptures provide insight into this core, but consider 1 Corinthians 15:1—11, where Paul reminds the Corinthians of the foundational elements of the gospel he declared. Within the words of the apostle Paul in these verses, we learn something of what the gospel actually *is*, what the gospel basically *says*, what the gospel personally *means*, and what the gospel ultimately *does*.

The Gospel Is God's Good News

It may seem a simple place to start, but the gospel *is* good news that is to be proclaimed and declared (1 Cor. 15:1–2). It is something to be communicated, believed, and received (1 Cor. 15:1–2). The gospel is not a personal feeling or a vague force but rather a message made up of words that are to be spoken in order that people believe them. Paul makes crystal clear elsewhere what is implicit here; the source of the gospel is God Himself (Rom. 1:1, Gal. 1:1–17). This was a gospel that the apostle had received from God rather than invented or discovered by himself. The gospel was revealed from above rather than developed on earth. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that this good news was “passed on” rather than created or changed. The soul-winner can take great confidence in the fact that the gospel is God's proclamation (Rom. 1:1–5). It is divine revelation expressed in words calling for human communication.

The words of the gospel are true in and of themselves whether they are accepted, understood, or acted upon by those who hear them. Any lack of response to the gospel does not alter its truthfulness. At the same time, we are to be good witnesses to the gospel. Our desire should be to share that gospel accurately and appropriately so that, as God enables, people will believe.

The Gospel Is about Christ

In 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, we have not only a record of what the gospel *is* but also a concise statement of what the gospel *says*. The gospel says that certain specific, significant events have taken place involving Jesus Christ. The gospel is about Jesus Christ Himself—especially His death, burial, resurrection, and postresurrection appearances. The events of the death and resurrection of Christ were “according to the Scriptures.” The Scriptures bear witness to these events as well as confirm them. The eyewitnesses of the postresurrection appearances of Christ also serve as authentication of the core truths of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:5–8).

It is important for the Christian and the soul-winner to appreciate the definite and specific historical nature of our gospel. The gospel is not, strictly speaking, a philosophy, a concept, or a series of ideas. The gospel declares certain events as facts, verified by the Scriptures and history. When soul-winning, it is important to speak of Jesus Christ as a real person who died and actually rose again from the dead. We can take comfort and confidence in the fact that our gospel is historically real and true and that the events of His death and resurrection have significance For us today.

The Gospel Means Forgiveness Is through Christ

We need to consider what this gospel personally *means*, especially for those who believe. The abiding meanings of the historical facts concerning Jesus Christ are wrapped up in the phrase “for our sins” (1 Cor. 15:3). The gospel message is that through Christ, and the specific historical events of Christ's death and resurrection, a means of forgiveness (or atonement), was purposed and accomplished. God is communicating to us in the gospel that Christ's death had a specific intention and meaning, the result of which is the forgiveness of sins (for those who believe). Behind Paul's concise wording is the idea that Christ died as a sacrifice for our sins. Thinking legally, He took upon Himself the penalty for our sins. In both the sacrificial and legal sense, Christ's death was a substitutionary death, which dealt with the sins of those who believe.

Paul was restating for the Corinthians that the fundamental problem the gospel addresses is “our sins.” The gospel is about how Christ purposefully died in order that sins could be forgiven. God initiated this means of forgiveness in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. We will say more about this problem of sin later, but our intent here is to stress the simplicity and centrality of the “sin issue” in how Paul presented his gospel. The good news is that Christ has dealt with the problem of our sin through His death, and He is victoriously and savingly alive.

The Gospel Leads to Salvation

What is a hearer to do with this message, and what *does* this gospel ultimately do for those who respond? The apostle Paul used the words *believe* and *receive* to speak of how the Christians at Corinth responded to the gospel. This speaks of a personal belief that goes beyond believing mere information; it speaks of taking to heart a message with radical implications. When people receive the gospel, they “stand” in it (or on it). It becomes the means of personal stability and activity. This is a message that is to be held fast with persevering faith, rather than a quick, shallow, artificial acceptance that comes without true personal acknowledgment and conviction.

What does the gospel do as one embraces it through sincere faith? The believer, as was true of the apostle Paul, receives the grace of God that changes the believer's life (1 Cor. 15:9–10). Forgiveness takes place, as is implicit in Paul's word here. Ultimately, salvation is the result of the gospel and its personal acceptance. This is a saving gospel, which speaks of being delivered from the consequences of sin. This gospel is the power of God resulting in salvation to everyone who truly believes (Rom. 1:16).

As believers, we should know the gospel, stand on the gospel, hold to the gospel, defend it, pass it on, declare it, proclaim it, and share it. This is “good news” that we can share with confidence. Why? Because of what it is, what it says, what it means, and what it does. It is God's message. It is about Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances. It is about forgiveness for our sins, and it brings salvation by God's grace.

Our Confidence in the Gospel

It is one thing to know the core of the gospel; it is another to have confidence in the gospel message itself. The apostle Paul writes, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the

righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Rom. 1:16–17). These verses present a personal declaration, a dynamic explanation, and a biblical confirmation of the truth of the gospel.

A Personal Declaration

The apostle says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16). The soul-winner needs to be able to make a similar declaration. This is not an arrogant boast but an expression of deep personal commitment and confidence (Rom. 1:1–17). This commitment on the part of the apostle is in light of his separation by God for the gospel (Rom. 1:1–7) and his service for God in the gospel (Rom. 1:8–15; 15:14–33). No matter what our specific work or profession, we, as believers, must be committed to the gospel truth that has saved us.

Having shared his life's commitment to the gospel ministry, the apostle wrote this clear and concise statement of confidence in the gospel (Rom. 1:16–17). Why did Paul make such a statement? It is possible that Paul was writing in light of someone or some group that had actually challenged him concerning the validity of the gospel. On the other hand, it is possible that Paul was just stating, *with confidence*, a summary concerning the gospel as he enters into his defense of it. The apostle does not appeal to his own personal conversion experience in his presentation in Romans. He gives a careful, sound, theological presentation and explanation of the gospel, which gives all of us reasons to share the apostle's confidence in the truth of the gospel. The soul-winner will find that his own study of these verses will strengthen his confidence in the gospel.

A Dynamic Explanation

Paul's “not-ashamed-ness” concerning the gospel is directly related to the

statement, “For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Paul's explanation here is dynamic in meaning and tone. It is dynamic because of the word *power*, which is at the heart of Paul's confidence in what the gospel is able to do.

A Powerful Means of Salvation. When Paul speaks of “power,” he is speaking of the gospel's ability to bring about the salvation that it declares is necessary in light of man's need. The gospel is God's means of salvation, a powerful means because of what it accomplishes and overcomes. The gospel does not contain magical words that if spoken correctly will bring about salvation. No, there is a direct link between the message of the gospel and the facts and realities these words proclaim (see 1 Cor. 1:18). What God has done in Christ makes salvation available for those who believe the gospel message, and that gospel message is what God has done in Christ! God uses this message by the power of His Holy Spirit to bring about the salvation that He purposes (1 Thess. 1:5; 2:13). What even the Law of God does not have the power to do, God has done to save those who believe (Rom. 8:1–4). But to appreciate the power of the gospel, we need to understand the need of man for salvation and the provision of God for salvation.

Man's Need of Salvation. Romans 1:18–3:20 forcefully declares the need for the gospel and the salvation it brings. At least four fundamental truths are interwoven in these verses that are true for all people. When put together, man's desperate need for salvation is crystal clear. Paul began by declaring that the “wrath of God is revealed from heaven” (1:18). What a starting place! Paul was saying that the terrible moral and societal conditions in our world give evidence to the “wrath of God” being revealed. God is righteously angry, and man is not in right relationship with Him because people have rejected what they know of God (1:18–23). God's disposition toward man is not one of pleasure but of wrath, which has resulted in God's allowing man to go his own way into sin and corruption (1:24–32). This serious situation has brought consequences that are evident in the world around us.

This may be a foreign idea to many people, yet most will nod in

agreement when presented with the idea that the world is not how it ought to be. I heard Dr. Stuart Briscoe remark on this precise point. Generally speaking, across continents, countries, and cultures, many will say or admit that things are not as they should be in this world. This is exactly what Paul is saying. But the reason he gives may not be the one that people have in mind. The reason for the presence of and the degree of unrighteousness, corruption, and sin in our world is fundamentally because of the crisis in the relationship between God and man. This has been brought about by man's rejection of the truth of God. Paul concluded this portion of his presentation by declaring that God's judgment and the penalty of death are to be faced by those who practice unrighteousness (1:31–32). Wrath, judgment, and death are three of the four fundamental truths that are a part of this crisis situation Paul presents.

Having declared God's wrath and His righteous judgment resulting in the penalty of death, Paul proceeded to argue for the sinfulness of all men (2:1–3:20). This is the fourth truth Paul presented, and this one is argued at greater length. Both the Law of God and the consciences of men point to and confirm the sinful acts and the sinfulness of all people (2:1–3:20). All men, Jews and Gentiles, ultimately stand guilty before a righteous God due to their own sins (3:19–20). Indeed, as Paul summarized later, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

This is the diagnosis of man's need. We saw earlier that at the core of the gospel message is the phrase “for our sins.” We now see the real significance of this phrase. Having sins forgiven is not just a nice idea. Forgiveness is needed because man is in desperate need of deliverance from God's wrath, judgment, and the penalty of death. Man is in need of salvation due to his sinfulness and its serious consequences, and this salvation must be provided by God Himself.

God's Provision of Salvation. Man's hopeless and helpless condition is met by God's specific and sufficient provision. Just as in 1 Corinthians, Paul has a particular emphasis in the way he presented his gospel in Romans.

Crucial to Paul's argument is that this salvation is the righteous activity of God (Rom. 3:21–26). The salvation or solution to man's problem did not come about in an arbitrary or flippant manner.

- The Righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21–26). Paul used a number of key words or phrases in these verses. We are “justified freely by His grace” (Rom. 3:24). This means that sinful men are declared to be right before God's Law and in relation to God without human merit or works (freely) as a gracious provision on God's part. Legally and ultimately we are declared “just,” free of charges, in the right. This has taken place through the deliverance “that is in Christ Jesus.” What was accomplished through the shed blood of Jesus was nothing short of a deliverance for those who believe, much like the Exodus generation experienced when they were delivered from the plague of death through the shed and applied blood of the Passover lambs (Exod. 12:1–30). The word *redemption* is pregnant with meaning. At the core, though, it refers to the “forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7) and the release and freedom from the consequences of sin through Christ's death and shed blood.

How this redemption took place is stated as follows: “whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith” (Rom. 3:25). God initiated this provision, praise His name! Christ was that provision, hallelujah! He became the means through His shed blood (“for our sins”) so that the wrath of God, the judgment of God, and the penalty of death were dealt with as He took them upon Himself. Christ was “set forth” as the way, the means, even “the place” where wrath, judgment, and death were resolved in a most gracious and complete manner. The word *propitiation*, a rare word today, speaks of the fact that Christ not only provided forgiveness of our sins, but God's righteous wrath and judgment were satisfied. This means of salvation (Christ Himself through His atoning death) was “set forth” purposely in this manner to demonstrate the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:25–26). The love of God was wonderfully shown as well (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16), but here in Romans 3, Paul is focusing on the rightness of God in doing what He did to save us. The

believer is declared right with God “justly” because Christ took upon Himself our sins, as well as the wrath and judgment of God, as He shed His blood and died. This forgiveness, deliverance, and its benefits are applied through faith to those who believe.

How we as believers should rejoice in the greatness of our gospel! Our wonderful God has a solution to the ultimate problem within this world, which includes our personal lives as well. He has done what we could never do to restore a broken relationship with Himself, a restoration for those who through faith enter into relationship with Him. The more we can say about how God has done this, the more the grace, the righteousness, the love, and the mercy of God will shine forth. To do that we need to be able to explain clearly the chasm between God and man because of our sin. Then we can gladly declare that God has chosen to initiate the way of restoration and rightness. God—in keeping with His gracious, righteous, and loving character—has provided His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one who makes things right. God has provided a specific and sufficient means of salvation to rescue man from a helpless and hopeless predicament.

- The Necessity of Faith (Rom. 3:27–4:25). The provision of justification is received by grace through faith. It is not a matter of human merit or works of the Law (3:27–31). There is no room for human “boasting” (3:27), as if we could do something to justify ourselves. Our being made right with God is given as a gift graciously and is received through faith. This is true for all people, Jews and Gentiles alike.

In Romans 4, Abraham is presented as the example, indeed the “father of all those who believe” (v. 11). Abraham is specifically the example of faith “accounted...for righteousness” (Rom. 4:9). The nature of this faith is that Abraham was “fully convinced that what [God] had promised He was able to perform” (Rom. 4:21). This is the type of faith that takes God at His Word, even in the face of the impossible from man's perspective. It is the type of faith that trusts God to do what He says He will do. It is the type of faith that trusts God to impute or account to us righteousness based on what God has

done in Christ for us. This is how we are made “right with God.” Paul explains this faith later in relation to hearing the Word of Faith (10:8), the Word of God (10:17). There needs to be a hearing of the truth, followed by a believing of the truth.

This believing comes from the heart and is expressed through confession. Paul's teaching in Romans 10:9–13 is a clear affirmation of the necessity of genuine faith for salvation (with no distinction between Jew and Greek). Specifically here in Romans 10 the confession relates to the Lord Jesus Himself. It is the Lord Jesus in whom we believe. We believe Him for who He is (the Lord Jesus), as well as in the light of what God has done for us through Him. He is the living, resurrected Lord who saves all who call upon Him (Rom. 10:13). This saving He could not do if He was not “raised...from the dead” Himself, so we must believe this wholeheartedly. He could not provide salvation from sin and death if He had not conquered sin and death. God has done the impossible in raising Jesus from the dead, and He now can do the impossible for us who believe. Believing results in our confessing, which is done in light of our need for the salvation that He offers. We “call” upon the Lord because we believe, we admit, we agree with God that we need to be saved. This need is due to our sins and the consequences of our sins and sinfulness. And this salvation is for all who believe on Him (Rom. 10:11) and “whoever calls on the name of the LORD” (Rom. 10:13).

One may ask, “What about repentance in all this?” Paul stated earlier in his gospel presentation, as he argued man's guilt, “Or do you despise the riches of [God's] goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). In Acts 20:21, Paul summarizes his gospel challenge in the phrase “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul declared to the Athenians that God was now commanding “all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). It is important to note that the type of “belief” and “confession” that Paul presents in Romans includes the radical change of mind and the allegiance to Christ that the word *repentance* would convey. The idea that one could or would

nod their head to Christ, say a few words, and think that their life was not impacted at the core level would not even make sense to Paul. As Paul presents in Romans 6–8, a faith union with Christ means a death, burial, and new life for the believer. Continuing in sin does not make sense at all if one understands the nature of true faith and the nature of the relationship the believer is entering into with his Lord. One of the evidences of true faith is the life change that will take place as people who have lived completely outside of Christ now commit their lives to Him as their Savior and Lord. People simply do not yet fully understand the gospel if they do not realize the seriousness of sin, the need for forgiveness, the gracious way God has provided forgiveness in Christ, and the necessity of faith—a faith that is radical in its implications as one confesses “the Lord Jesus” and unites with Christ in a new life.

- The Benefits to Man. It literally would take a study of the whole Bible to express adequately the wonderful nature of this *salvation* in Christ and all of the benefits to man through Him. The apostle Paul presents some of these benefits in Romans 5:1–11:36 as he proceeds in the declaration and defense of His gospel. We will only touch on a few blessings of salvation which are mentioned in Romans 5:1–11. For Paul salvation is a broad concept, which refers to being saved completely from the consequences of sin. This includes salvation from sin, judgment, death, and the wrath of God. Salvation is not just due to the death of Christ but through His life (Rom. 5:10). It is a comprehensive concept and experience. But within salvation and in the light of salvation there are specific benefits that we experience as believers.

We start with *justification* itself, which speaks of being declared right before God, free of all charges due to our sin (Rom. 5:1). This means that we have *peace* with God because we have been reconciled to Him (Rom. 5:1, 11). Christ died for us when we were sinners and enemies of God (Rom. 5:8, 10). The reality is that man's sinfulness and blatant sins reveal that man is not serving God and rather is God's enemy. God has initiated *reconciliation* and peace. He has made peace a reality for those who are justified by faith. This

is closely related to Paul's next phrase, "We have access by faith into this *grace* in which we stand" (Rom. 5:2). We have a standing and an experience with God that is based on grace. We are in a *relationship* based on divine favor and mercy, one in which grace is not only given but abounds and reigns (Rom. 5:12–21). This leads to a life of *rejoicing* in hope (Rom. 5:2); because God's grace in salvation does not stop with justification and peace, it includes *future glory*. Paul spelled out later that the whole direction of salvation is *complete redemption* and glorification (Rom. 8:1–39). We have a life of genuine and certain *hope* because God's plan of salvation includes being saved from wrath (Rom. 5:9) and experiencing future eternal glory. The present experience of man outside of Christ is to "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). God's salvation in Christ not only brings about *justification* and *sanctification* but also *glorification*. This glorification will be completed as a part of the future glory of God when He consummates His divine purpose. The salvation we proclaim is an eternal salvation.

You may ask, "But, what about now?" Just when you might think that Paul has left the arena of everyday life, he states that we are able to "glory," boast, or have confidence *now* in the midst of "tribulations" (Rom. 5:3). This is because the immediate tribulations of life produce *perseverance* and *character* that lead to hope. This hope is experienced now, in the midst of difficulties, and is not disappointed "because the *love of God* has been poured out in our hearts by *the Holy Spirit* who was given to us" (Rom. 5:4–5). Paul introduces love and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit within one sentence (Rom. 5:5). The believer has reason to rejoice and to hope, and that hope is encouraged by the assurance of God's love through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul went on to express more fully what the role of the Holy Spirit is in chapter 8, but here we learn that the Holy Spirit has entered into the believer's life, both communicating the love of God to us clearly and deeply and giving us a resource and reason for hope in God's future glory.

These are just *some* of the benefits and blessings that are a part of the salvation declared in the gospel. In sharing the gospel, it is certainly

appropriate to let people know what God has done, is doing, and plans to do for those who trust in Christ. These are no small truths! These facets of God's gracious provision are a part of the reason that we can speak of the gospel as “the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The gospel takes man from desperate hopelessness to all that is available in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. God has met man in his helpless state and provided a full and complete salvation that can be described as nothing short of powerful.

An Impartial Means of Salvation. One of the key points Paul makes in Romans is that God is completely fair, just, and impartial. Paul affirmed the historical priority, the privileges, and the continuing purpose of God for Israel. At the same time, Paul was concerned to show that God is absolutely just and impartial in the way He has provided salvation. In sharing the gospel, we can be confident in declaring that the God of salvation is fair. Paul affirmed that there is one God (Rom. 3:30), and this God is impartial in His judgment (Rom. 2:11) and in His provision of salvation (Rom. 10:12–13). All people are sinners (Rom. 3:9, 23). God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ is “to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace” (Rom. 3:22–24). In salvation, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him” (Rom. 10:12).

This is an incredibly important truth to know as we seek to declare this amazing gospel throughout the world. God is global. His salvation is a global salvation to all who believe. We do not need to be ashamed of our gospel not only because “it is the power of God to salvation” but also because it is “for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Yes, there was historical priority and revelatory privilege for the Jews. There is a continuing purpose for Israel, as is seen in Romans 9:1–11:36. But the gospel is for all. God has been fair and is ultimately impartial in the way He judges people and in the way He justifies them.

How the clear teaching of Paul concerning the impartiality of God intersects with the clear truths concerning God's sovereignty and eternal

purposes has been discussed and debated for years. It would not be wise for us to attempt a thorough discussion of these issues in the scope of this book. But the person declaring the gospel of Christ should not be paralyzed by these doctrinal issues or questions. First Timothy 2:4 reveals that the desire of God is that “all men...be saved and...come to the knowledge of the truth.” We should have this desire as well. And we can affirm confidently that “there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:5–6). At the same time we know that not all will be saved. Ultimately, the sovereign purpose of God through Christ is to save those who believe and call on the Lord. God is sovereign in His purpose and in the means He chooses. In the immediate context in Romans 10, Paul indicates that faith “comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (v. 17). The gospel is to be declared in order that people will believe.

We know from other Scriptures that the Holy Spirit must work in order for people to respond to the gospel authentically (1 Thess. 1:5–6). People are born again by the Spirit of God (John 3:1–16). The work of Christ through Paul is the focus of his boast as he speaks of the response of the Gentiles to the gospel (Rom. 15:18). Authentic salvation is, of course, the work of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. True conversion is by the work and power of God; and people who are saved are the elect, the called of God (1 Thess. 1:4). We know that God is a God of foreknowledge, predestination, purpose, and calling (Rom. 8:28–30). Just as people must call on the Lord to be saved, we know that the Scriptures speak of believers being “called” of God (Rom. 8:28, 30). These are basic biblical truths, and we can be confident that God has chosen to use His gospel in the outworking of His plan of salvation. In other words, the declaring, the preaching, the sharing of the gospel is the purpose and plan of God. God uses His truth in the gospel, with the working and power of the Holy Spirit, to bring people to faith and salvation. Indeed, because it is the sovereign purpose of God to save those who believe in the gospel, this gives us confidence in the gospel itself and gives us reason to

share it. We can affirm, also, that God has been totally fair, just, and impartial in the provision of salvation and the means used.

A Sufficient Means of Salvation

- Sufficient for Everyone Who Believes. We have already affirmed that this salvation is “for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). It is sufficient in that it is for both Jews and Greeks, for “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). Our gospel is a global gospel that is to be preached, proclaimed, and spoken to everyone.
- Sufficient through Faith. The word *believes* in Romans 1:16 indicates that what the gospel offers (salvation) can be experienced through faith and faith alone (see also 1:17). No hidden agenda or doctrine complicates this gospel. Yes, true faith will result in obedience and life transformation. Yes, true faith needs to be expressed in baptism and an affirmation of union with Christ and will result in holiness of life. Yes, a true believer should grow and serve in the context of the local church. Yes, true faith will be a part of life in the Spirit. Yes, true faith will demonstrate itself in works. Yes, a true believer should be the same as a true disciple who in faith counts the cost and follows Christ. The gospel declares that salvation is received through faith alone because of what Christ has done for us. We can do nothing to earn or merit our salvation. Jesus Christ and Him crucified is our message (1 Cor. 2:2). Christ and what He has done, according to the gracious provision of God the Father, is totally and completely sufficient in addressing the need of man in relation to salvation.
- Sufficient for Salvation. The sufficiency of the gospel needs to be affirmed in terms of its blessings and its eternal efficacy. Full salvation is offered in and through the gospel. Salvation past, present, and future is proclaimed. Justification, sanctification, and glorification are proclaimed in the gospel. The blessings of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are available (Eph. 1:3–14). This is a complete

and sufficient gospel that proclaims a complete and sufficient salvation.

Many false messages in our world lead to frustration and bondage. Many “offers” prove to be half-truths or lead to disappointment and bitterness. Our gospel is true and sufficient. It provides the ultimate answers for man's ultimate problems. This does not mean we can make claims that are outside of the clear teaching of Scripture. Much harm can and has been done by people making promises the gospel does not make. Tribulations are still a part of the believer's experience. Believers will still need to face the sinful nature in daily life. Indeed, we still live in a fallen world with a fallen nature within us. Believers are called to put on armor for a battle (Eph. 6:10–20), run a race (Heb. 12:1–2), and take up their cross (Matt. 10:38) with a no-turning-back commitment to Christ (Luke 9:57–62). The Christian life is an abundant life (John 10:10), but it is also a challenging and difficult life in this sinful and corrupt world.

The true gospel will not disappoint or discourage. The gospel is a gospel of joy and hope in the midst of the difficulties and suffering experienced in this world. God has provided a salvation that we could not bring about or even imagine. And because of God's grace, we can say even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances, “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37). We can be confident, also, that the same God “who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,” will also “freely give us all things” (Rom. 8:32). We will not always be given what we want or experience what we want. But we know that God is sufficient, and His grace is sufficient for all of life. We do not need to be ashamed of the gospel.

A Biblical Confirmation

Before we conclude this chapter, we need to note the way Paul followed his personal declaration and dynamic explanation with a biblical confirmation

in Romans 1:17, “For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” The epistle to the Romans is known for its many quotations from the Old Testament. The apostle Paul regularly used the Scriptures to affirm, confirm, support, or illustrate gospel truth. Paul went to the Old Testament prophecy of Habakkuk to give scriptural precedence and verification for a fundamental truth that he was presenting in his gospel declaration (Rom. 1:16–17). Paul had already referred to the promises concerning God's Son “Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 1:2–3) that came “through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” But here he quoted specific wording, “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4), wording that relates directly to his presentation concerning the righteousness of God and justification by faith. Consider the significance of this use of the Scriptures:

First, although Paul proclaimed the newness of God's revelation and righteousness in Christ, this gospel revelation was witnessed “by the Law and the Prophets” (Rom. 3:21). This Habakkuk quotation is an example of this witness. The Old Testament Scriptures predict and proclaim gospel truths. This scriptural confirmation, and many others, indicates that Paul viewed the Old Testament as authoritative without apology. He went to the *Old Testament* at times not only to confirm and support gospel truth but also to understand and explain gospel truth.

We should keep this in mind as we share the gospel. We should affirm the authority of the Scriptures even if people do not share the same view. The Old Testament can also be a great picture and illustration book to help explain or underline gospel truths. Old Testament accounts, prophecies, and pictures can help to support and explain gospel truth.

Second, Paul viewed the gospel itself as divine revelation. Just as we saw in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul viewed the gospel as from God and not the discovery or insights of men. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God that is “from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17). The righteousness revealed in the gospel is all of faith. Being declared righteous is all of God and is received by

faith. It is God's righteous provision in Christ. These truths are divine revelation.

For us today these truths and indeed the gospel itself are contained in the *New Testament*. Because it is divine revelation, it is viewed as authoritative Scripture. Today we use the New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, authoritatively to give biblical confirmation when we present the gospel. We can be confident in the Scriptures as we share the gospel, and we can say or sing:

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled?¹

The soul-winner has glorious truth to share. It is wonderful to communicate gospel truth out of the overflow of our own understanding and appreciation of the gospel and salvation. This gospel has reached us personally, and this salvation is ours in Christ personally. Our knowledge of the gospel and of the Lord Himself needs to grow in such a way that it fills our hearts and minds with gratitude. It needs to grow in the context of our daily experience of the salvation that is ours in Christ. Personal growth and knowledge of the gospel will give us an increasing desire to share this good news with others. This we should always do with confidence in the gospel. Such confidence will enable us to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel." A personal declaration such as this can lead to a dynamic explanation supported appropriately with biblical confirmation. As the Lord leads us into people's lives and witnessing situations, we need to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in everything we do and say. We can be confident in Him and also in the truth that is ours to communicate. Praise God for the soul-winner's truth!

For Reflection and Response

1. How do people view truth today? In what ways does this impact the way we present the truth of the gospel, if any? What do you say to someone who does not believe in God, divine revelation, or absolute truth?
2. Complete the following sentence with your own words. "I am not ashamed of the gospel because _____."
3. What are some of the barriers or problems you have faced when trying to explain the gospel? What did you do? What have you learned from these experiences?
4. Review the core truths of the gospel. Explain these truths to a friend who will ask you questions about what you share. Let his or her questions help you refine your understanding and explanation of the core truths.

CHAPTER FIVE



The Soul-Winner's Technique

Scriptures for Study

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:16–22

NO RIGID RULE CAN be laid down for personal soul-winning or, indeed, for any other form of Christian service. God is sovereign in His work and never deals with any two people in exactly the same way. For that reason alone, the soul-winner should be prepared always to follow God's leading rather than his own methods and techniques, however well they may have been tried and proved.

Having said that cautionary word, we consider the technique in soul-winning in three movements:

The Approach

Assuming that the soul-winner is always on alert for opportunities for personal evangelism, his contact with people may well be along any one of the following approaches:

The Shock Approach

This must always be used with care. It denotes a sudden approach to a person, broaching the subject of his soul's welfare at once.

There were occasions when our Lord used this method, but careful study shows that the circumstances and people concerned justified His approach every time. Think, for instance, of the words He used when addressing an eminent theologian of his day, as recorded in John 3. Nothing in the story leads us to believe that there was any gradual buildup to the Savior's abrupt statements: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... . Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5).

In fact, on the surface, it would appear that His approach was unrelated to

Nicodemus's introductory remarks.

The shock approach, in special instances, may well be the Holy Spirit's means of awakening to a sense of need in a person to whom the gospel has been presented already but who has given little evidence of being either interested or concerned.

The kind of questions asked on these occasions will be well-known by the experienced soul-winner. For example: Are you saved? Have you been born again? Do you have a living experience with the Lord Jesus Christ? If you died today, do you know that you would go to heaven?

The Gentle Approach

This signifies the winning of the individual through deeds of kindness—for example, studied points of common interest, the same job, similar hobbies, and so on—and the kind of friendliness to all people, in all circumstances, that becomes a disciple of “the Friend of sinners.”

The Conversational Approach

This method must be diligently cultivated by the soul-winner. Experience has proven that, once a conversation begins, there are few topics that cannot be turned to serve the ultimate aim of presenting the gospel.

To be a good conversationalist, the soul-winner must study to be well-informed, sociable, and adaptable. He must keep abreast of public news, contemporary life, and modern thought. At school we were advised never to contemplate house-to-house evangelism or a preaching trek without first reading through the current issues of the public press and popular magazines, giving attention especially to politics, sports, fashion, and general news. Nothing causes an outsider to lose interest more quickly than the evidence in a soul-winner of unrelatedness to contemporary life and ignorance of public affairs. The impression he gets at once is that here is a man whose

Christianity does not work in everyday life.

The Literature Approach

The soul-winner should carry with him well-written and tastefully produced booklets and tracts. As opportunities present themselves, the appropriate piece of literature should be offered to the individual with a prayer that it may lead to a worthwhile talk. The soul-winner should be familiar with the contents of each booklet or tract and know how to answer the types of questions that might naturally arise from reading the literature.

The possibilities of tract distribution are beyond all computation. A recent graduate of the Olford Fellowship Program reminded us of that fact. As a child, he had been raised in the Quaker church but was never saved. When he was a teenager, his family moved to an area that did not have a Quaker church; and, subsequently, the family stopped attending church. He began to drift farther from the things of God and deeper into the evil influences of the world.

During the Vietnam War, this young man joined the Army Security Agency and was sent to Turkey. He began corresponding with a young Christian woman back in the States. After a period of time, they became engaged and were married on Christmas Eve, 1967, while he was home on leave. When he and his bride returned to Turkey, things were less than ideal:

I was still unsaved. I tried to bring my young, nineteen-year-old wife over to my sinful way of living. She attempted to fit into my sinful way of living, but she was totally out of place. She was a professing Christian who had married a nonbeliever and was experiencing the negatives of such a relationship. My attempt to persuade her to my kind of living made me take a hard look at my own life. It was like taking a lamb and throwing it in a pig pen.

One night, after working the late shift, he came home to find his wife asleep. He checked the mail and found a letter addressed to him from his

wife's pastor in the States. Inside the letter was a tract entitled *The Three Hopes*:

It started with these questions: Where are you putting your hope? In yourself? In the world? Or in Jesus Christ? I knew I could not put any hope in myself. I knew I could not put any hope in the world. I realized, for the first time in my life, that I was spiritually lost! It was as if I saw myself being cast out into the darkness of space, alone and lost. I got down on my knees and asked the Lord to forgive me of my sins.

I gave my life to Him that night in Yalova, Turkey.

Today that man is in full-time ministry. He has been a chaplain to those in prison as well as those serving in the military. He has served as a pastor, a staff pastor, and an interim pastor in churches around the country.¹ The point here is this: one tract, read by one man, has had an eternal impact on countless lives. What a harvest!

A tract is dynamic because it is as powerful as the Word of God that it carries. It is versatile because it can be used in many ways. It is timeless because it never loses its vitality; it never dies. It is safe because it will never confuse or garble its message. It will speak without fear or favor. It is universal because there is no language in which it cannot bring its message. It takes no account of race, color, or condition of life, being as much at home in a rundown hut as in a gilded palace. It is convenient because it is easily procured and easily passed on to others. All that a tract requires is that willing hands bring it into contact with human souls.

The After-Meeting Approach

This is the introduction to soul-winning that is often unused or misused but nonetheless provides the most fruitful opportunities for winning men and women to Christ. At the close of an evangelistic meeting, the soul-winner should keep a careful lookout for any who may be open to the gospel

message. Without appearing to be an observer, the soul-winner should watch for the person who lingers at the back of the auditorium or church or who wistfully looks around to catch the eye of the speaker or who shows evident signs of conviction and brokenness. Avoiding tactless buttonholing, the soul-winner should approach such an individual and pleasantly introduce himself by saying, “Good evening. So nice to see you. I trust you enjoyed the service.” Or, “Would you like to meet the speaker?” Or, “Is there any way in which I can help you?” Or, “May I give you one of our booklets?” Or, “I hope you will be back with us next week!”

The immediate reaction to such an approach will indicate how far to proceed or whether to go no further. Whatever happens, the person thus approached must not be sent away embarrassed or offended but rather with an enthusiastic determination to return for further help.

The Planned-Meeting Approach

In regular Christian work this is the best method of all. Once people know that the soul-winner is willing and available for planned meetings, it is astounding how many will take advantage of this. The home, the church, the convenient restaurant, and the unoccupied office are places where people can go regularly to discuss their problems and seek spiritual help.

These are some of the approaches the soul-winner may use to introduce himself and his message to lost souls.

The second movement is:

The Analysis

Assuming that the approach has been made, the next step is to analyze the need without embarrassing the person concerned. It is best to get that person alone if at all possible. Great care is needed here, especially if the individual

has brought a friend or friends. Mutual confidence must be established by genuine interest, sympathy, and a sincere desire to help. The soul-winner should always be ready to see the other person's point of view. When common ground has been gained, it is then time to begin the analysis of the spiritual state of the seeker. This can be done only through prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, free and easy conversation, thoughtful questions, patient listening, and careful observation. For example, the look on the face, the tone of the voice, and the general manner of the individual indicate his response.

Such an analysis will bring the experienced soul-winner to certain conclusions. He will discover that the seeker falls under one of the following categories:

A Superficial Sinner

This is the type of person who evidences no conviction of sin whatsoever and may even show a spirit of utter carelessness, flippancy, and amusement. These external manifestations, however, must never lead the soul-winner to conclude that there is not a seeking heart under the seeming superficialities. The business of the soul-winner is to offer Christ in such a way that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment (see John 16:8–11).

A Skeptical Sinner

This individual counters the soul-winner's approach with what he calls intellectual problems, serious doubts, or religious difficulties. The best method here is to get the unbeliever to discuss his objections or difficulties freely until it becomes clear whether they spring from genuine intellectual problems or from matters of moral consequence. If it is the former, then the soul-winner should try to solve the problems through balanced reasoning or suggested reading. If it is the latter, then the soul-winner should make a real

attempt to bring the seeker to see that his real problem is a controversy with God because of the seeker's love of sin.

A Serious Sinner

This man definitely wants to get right with God. He is aware of his sin and need of the Savior but does not know the simple steps into the experience of salvation. There is no greater joy, albeit a solemn responsibility, for the soul-winner than to be confronted with a genuinely serious sinner.

The soul-winner's procedure constitutes our next point.

The Appeal

The analysis of the spiritual state of the seeker will determine the kind of appeal to win the soul. Each category will require its own treatment. Basically, however, the aim is to win the mind, heart, and will.

To achieve this, it is necessary to present the gospel in order to:

Satisfy the Soul

This leads the seeker to say, "I must be saved." It requires a reasonable presentation of the truth. At this stage, therefore, it is possible, as well as wise, to convey the truth without necessarily turning to scriptural passages. This approach might well be supported also by the experience and testimonies of respected and well-known Christian men and women.

Stir the Heart

This leads the seeker to say, "I can be saved." Here it is essential to use the Word of God so that the faith of the individual does not stand "in the

wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). Nothing stirs the heart like the Word of God rightly interpreted and applied. (*The Seven Steps in God's Way of Salvation*, in chapter 3, might apply here.)

Strengthen the Will

This gets the seeker to say, “I will be saved.” This is the personal and practical response. The soul-winner's solemn responsibility at this point is to lead the seeker to repent to God and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as Sin-Bearer, Savior, and Sovereign.

To crystallize his act of faith, the soul-winner can invite audible prayer. Depending largely on the seeker's background and capabilities, the soul-winner determines whether he should be asked to pray in his own words or repeat a simple form of response. Much discernment and prayerfulness are needed here so as to obviate embarrassment and confusion. A simple prayer that the soul-winner may well use is:

Dear God,

Realizing that I am a sinner, and believing that the Lord Jesus Christ died to put away my sin and rose again to justify me, I now receive Him as my personal Savior and acknowledge Him as Lord of my life. Amen.

Supporting scriptural references include: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “Jesus our Lord ... was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Rom. 4:24–25). “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

Whether the soul-winner kneels for prayer with the seeker is a matter of individual judgment and decision in light of the circumstances and persons concerned. On no account should the seeker be manipulated, offended, or

insulted in any way whatsoever.

Having led him to receive Christ, the soul-winner should now teach him to seek:

Communion with the Lord by systematically reading His Word, spending time in prayer, and identifying himself with the fellowship of a local, Christ-exalting church (see Matt. 4:4; Luke 18:1; Heb. 10:25).

Cleansing from the Lord when sin is committed (see 1 John 1:9).

Confession of the Lord by trusting Him, as the indwelling Christ, to live and speak through him in every circle of life (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; 4:13).

God, make us “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

For Reflection and Response

1. What role does the Holy Spirit have in the soul-winner's approach?
2. How can you better assess the spiritual condition of the people to whom you are witnessing? What is the value of such an assessment?
3. What challenges or difficulties can you expect when you give an appeal for people to respond to the gospel? Understanding that there are various ways to appeal for a response, discuss with a friend or write out one that calls for a genuine response to the gospel.
4. Knowing that the Holy Spirit must lead in these situations, when would you pray for someone or with someone to receive Christ? When would you lead in prayer? When would you let him pray?

CHAPTER SIX



The Soul-Winner's Target

Scriptures for Study

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I

also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

COLOSSIANS 1:21–29

WHEN JESUS SENT FORTH His apostles to evangelize the world, He did not commission them to secure decisions but rather to make disciples of all nations (see Matt. 28:19). And the soul-winner today does not fulfill his task if he does not keep that target or goal before him.

The evangelistic *objective* should be nothing less than maturity in Christ since He is the only hope of the world now and in the age to come. Thus, the apostle Paul could say, “We preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

In the “Scriptures for Study” we are clearly shown:

The Means of Achieving This Target

“Christ...[whom] we preach” (Col. 1:27–28). The soul-winner can never be successful in this ministry unless he aims at perfection (or maturity). So the objective must be to make men and women like Christ.

To achieve this aim, the soul-winner must faithfully present twin truths concerning the Lord Jesus.

Christ for Us

“You, who once were alienated and enemies...He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:21–23; see also 1 Cor. 1; 2:2). The convert must be grounded and settled in the great

doctrines that center in the work of Christ on the cross, that is, Christ for us.

To illustrate this, consider the benefits of the work that Christ accomplished at Calvary, as found in Colossians 1 alone. We are told that through the cross we have:

Redemption. “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). Unlike any other death, Christ's outpoured life paid the ransom price for sinners who were in the slave market for sin.

Forgiveness. “In whom we have...forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). By virtue of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, the believer's sins can be removed “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12)—the place of no return; “behind [God's] back” (Isa. 38:17)—the place of no remembrance; and “into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19)—the place of no recovery. No other death could have accomplished this.

Peace. “Having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20) or, as one translation renders it, “making peace through the blood of His cross” (HCSB). This is not a peace made with God but a God-made peace. The long struggle between the sin of man and the righteousness of God was brought to an honorable end in the cross of Christ and now peace can be the portion of all who believe.

Reconciliation. “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (Col. 1:21–22). The cross is such an overwhelming manifestation of God's holy love and justice that to get a true vision of it is to have the enmity of the heart slain and to experience the reconciliation that follows through repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ in Us

“Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27; see also Galatians 2:20). The convert must be taught something of:

The Miracle of Christ's Incoming. Even though we speak so simply of receiving the Lord Jesus into our hearts and lives, we must never forget that His incoming constitutes one of the greatest mysteries and miracles in the universe. The apostle Paul spoke of it as the secret that was hidden from angels and men in all ages but now has been revealed to us (Eph. 3:1–12).

It involves nothing less than:

- A Miraculous Operation. Praying for the Ephesian believers, the great apostle says, “I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,...that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:14, 16–17). This miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit is necessary in order to strengthen our inner man to say yes to the incoming of Christ and to enable us to understand the wonder of His indwelling.
- A Miraculous Revelation. Saul of Tarsus had two distinct revelations of the Lord Jesus at the time of his conversion. The first occurred when God revealed Jesus to him on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:3–5). This revelation slew the enmity of his heart and led him to surrender to Jesus as Savior and Lord. The second revelation appears to have occurred while he was at prayer in Damascus, waiting for God's next step for his life.

The apostle later recalled this experience when he said, “It pleased God...to reveal His Son in me” (Gal. 1:15–16). Such a revelation was not only miraculous; it was utterly transforming and compelling. Immediately following it, the young believer became convinced of God's power and purpose for his life, without having to solicit advice or help from man.

How the soul-winner needs to bring home to the young convert the true meaning of Christ's indwelling!

The Measure of Christ's Indwelling. “The riches of the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you” (Col. 1:27). Notice also Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17).

Dr. Handley G. Moule, in his commentary on Ephesians, pointed out that the word *dwell* here means “*settled* residence.”¹ So the apostle's longing for the saints at Ephesus was that Christ might be at home in their lives.

With many Christians there seems to be a wide gap between the acceptance of Christ's incoming and the acknowledgment of Christ's indwelling. The convert must be taught from the beginning to “sanctify the Lord God” in his heart (1 Pet. 3:15).

For Christ to be hallowed as Lord, the believer must give Him the best room in the house, which is the heart, and complete lordship throughout the home, which is the life. Only then can the believer confidently and truly say, “Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

This is the *means* of achieving the goal of presenting every man perfect in Christ.

But next consider:

The Method of Achieving This Target

As soul-winners we are to “preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom” (Col. 1:28).

Two methods of instruction are set forth here.

Warning Every Man

This is the negative side. The convert should be warned about many things. He must not get the idea that, because he has trusted Christ, he has nothing more about which to be concerned; that all is well; that he will have

no more problems, difficulties, or trials ahead! On the contrary, the soul-winner should warn him about:

The Deceitfulness of Sin (see 1 John 1:6–2:2). John, that great under-shepherd, is telling his converts here that if they say they have no sin, they deceive themselves and the truth is not in them.

The babe in Christ must learn that full salvation should be considered in three aspects—salvation in the past, present, and future. The past deals with the penalty of sin; the present, with the power of sin; and the future, with the presence of sin.

In view of this, a person can be truly saved and yet be conscious of inward sin. On the other hand, while sin is dormant, it need not be dominant (see Rom. 6:12–14).

Because it is dormant, however, it follows that until the day of final deliverance, sin can defeat and defile; and for this reason believers continue to need confession and cleansing (see 1 John 1:9).

The Devices of Satan (see 2 Cor. 2:11). Until a person is converted, he may not be aware of Satan's presence and activity in the world, but this is completely changed once a soul trusts the Savior. On this point the apostle could speak from firsthand experience, for he said, “We are not ignorant of [the Devil's] devices” (2 Cor. 2:11).

Thank God, however, there is victory for the feeblest Christian who knows how to submit to God and resist the Devil (see James 4:7; Rev. 12:9–11).

The Desires of Self (see Gal. 5:16–26). The newly committed Christian discovers not only the presence of sin and the power of Satan but also the problem of self, the old nature; for “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another” (Gal. 5:17).

Here again the soul-winner must provide instruction to starve the “old man” and feed the “new man.” To fulfill this simple injunction in the power of the Holy Spirit is to know victory day by day (see Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 4:22–24).

Teaching Every Man

Jesus commissioned His apostles to make disciples by teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them (Matt. 28:19–20). So the convert must learn to continue “steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Notice how Paul carried this out in his own ministry (Acts 20:27). Examine the amount of teaching contained in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, in light of three weeks of evangelistic endeavor in that city!

So the soul-winner is to warn and teach his converts in order to present them “perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

One other thought deserves attention:

The Manner of Achieving This Target

Paul said, “To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” (Col. 1:29). From this and other similar verses throughout the apostle's writings, we learn that in order to achieve the goal of presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus, the soul-winner must know something of:

The Concern of the Father

“In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). The great-hearted apostle here wished to remind his readers of his own paternal rights, which could never be invalidated by subsequent laborers in the field. As a father in the faith, he had a real concern for his children and beseeched them to be his followers (see 1 Cor. 4:16).

The Travail of the Mother

“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). The parental relationship is expressed in tenderest form. Paul wrote here not as a father but, rather, as a mother.

Jesus described this experience when He said, “A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world” (John 16:21).

The Sacrifice of the Lover

“I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved” (2 Cor. 12:15). As the lover of their souls, he was prepared to spare no labor, self-denial, or suffering that he might woo them for his Master. Note carefully that this expression of ever increasing and abundant love for them is set against the diminishing return of love by the church at Corinth.

The Jealousy of the Friend

“I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2).

Here, of course, Paul spoke as the Bridegroom's friend and expressed a holy jealousy and fear, lest by any means, “as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness,” so his converts should “be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).

Like John the Baptist before him, Paul could anticipate no greater joy than that of presenting his converts to Christ as “a chaste virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2; see also John 3:29–30).

The Gentleness of the Nurse

“We were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” (1 Thess. 2:7). What love and experience in delivering and developing a babe are linked together in the twin thoughts of mother and nurse!

Most scholars see here the thought of the nursing mother, cherishing her children, being affectionately desirous that they should grow up to be healthy and strong.

The Authority of the Officer

“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3–4). As a good soldier himself, the apostle was here inviting his son in the faith to suffer affliction with him in the cause of the gospel. His desire for Timothy was that he should fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the Devil, and continue as a faithful soldier unto the end of life.

The Striving of the Servant

“I became a minister... . To this end I also labor, striving” (Col. 1:25, 29).

As a minister, or servant of the Lord Jesus, the apostle exerted himself like an athlete, laboring and striving in order to present every man perfect in Christ. Both the words *labor* and *striving* are metaphors from the arena and convey the idea of agony and exertion.

The soul-winner must be a believer of many parts if he is to achieve the goal of bringing his converts to perfection in Christ. Sometimes he must be a father; at other times he must be a mother; and on occasions he must be a lover or a servant until his task is complete.

God, enable us to be soul-winners with the true target before us.

For Reflection and Response

1. Do you think soul-winning has been defined too narrowly at times?
What dangers does this present?
2. In what ways can local churches do a better job of taking people from conversion to growth and service? What can you do to become involved and encourage the spiritual growth of new believers?
3. Knowing the soul-winner's ultimate target, how does that impact the way you think about and participate in soul-winning?

CHAPTER SEVEN



The Soul-Winner's Travail

Scriptures for Study

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for I my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

ROMANS 9:1–5

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

ROMANS 10:1

WRITING TO THE THESSALONIANS and recalling his soul-winning

work among them, the apostle Paul said, “Remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for...we preached to you the gospel of God” (1 Thess. 2:9).

The expression *toil* here denotes the travail, labor, and weariness that were involved in bringing the men and women at Thessalonica to a personal knowledge of Christ. Souls are not easily won although they may appear to be when we observe the glamorized mass evangelism of our modern age. Men and women can never be born into the kingdom of God without tears and travail. Even if an evangelist does not pay the price, God has His own who are prepared to suffer with Christ in order to bring His redemptive purposes in the world. When Paul said, “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (Gal. 4:19), he was obviously referring to the initial travail he must have experienced when he brought into being, under God, the church at Galatia, as well as to his subsequent travail as he saw these Galatian Christians lapse into legalism.

What this soul travail involves is best summed up for us in the opening verses of Romans 9. This passage follows hard upon Romans 8. For only a man who knows the Spirit-filled life of Romans 8 can appreciate the evangelistic heartthrob of Romans 9. From the divine standpoint this section of the epistle to the Romans reveals how God, in sovereign righteousness, relates His purposes of grace to His ancient people, the Jews. From the believer's point of view, however, the verses before us set forth the nature of a true passion for souls and, particularly, how this passion expresses itself toward our own family and friends.

Let us, therefore, examine these words with a prayer that God will show us the passion, which issues in the travail of bringing souls to birth.

Notice, first of all, how Paul speaks of:

A Real Passion for Souls

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me

witness in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 9:1).

In these words, the spring of a real passion for souls is traced to:

A True Experience of Christ

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying” (Rom. 9:1). Weymouth renders this, “I am telling you the truth as a Christian man.”¹ The thought here is that an experience of Christ is inseparably associated with a passion for souls. In other words, no one can be a real Christian without sharing something of the Savior's travail for the lost. To say that unconverted people around us do not concern us is to reveal that our Christianity is nothing more than head knowledge, which puffs up into proud orthodoxy. If and when a so-called Christian reaches this state of mind, he becomes like the scribes and Pharisees of whom Jesus had to say, “You travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves” (Matt. 23:15). There is all the difference in the world between evangelizing and proselytizing.

A true experience of Christ leads to:

A True Exercise of Conscience

“My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 9:1). Intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus is always followed by an exercise of conscience regarding the lost. The Holy Spirit sees to it that the heartthrobs of the Savior for men and women are made real in the believer's conscience. The Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirits concerning what is going on in the heart of Christ. We need to ask ourselves why we often have a conscience about jealousy, pride, theft, swearing, and the like but fail to have any exercise of conscience concerning our fellowmen who are going to hell. The obvious answer is that our fellowship with Christ is not close enough to cause us to sense or hear the Holy Spirit's witness to our own conscience. Our

constant prayer to God should be that He would give us such a true experience of Christ that our conscience may be ever sensitive to the needs of the lost.

Paul's words reveal not only a real passion for souls but also:

A Regular Passion for Souls

“I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart” (Rom. 9:2).

The apostle's passion for souls was nothing spasmodic or intermittent. His experience was rather one of continual heaviness and anguish of heart on behalf of the lost.

Consider for a moment the significance of these two statements.

Continual Heaviness

This remarkable soul-winner calls it “great sorrow,” indicating that every day the weight of concern grew heavier and heavier. Which of us can dare to face this testimony of Paul without a sense of guilt? Often our experience is just the opposite. In the glow of our first love, we were eager to win the lost: we prayed; we watched; we sought. But as the days have passed, so the weight of that early concern lifted until now we are careless and sometimes lighthearted about the whole matter. We find it much easier to escape into administrative and organizational aspects of the work of God. We become absorbed with things instead of being concerned for men and women. God have mercy upon us!

Such was the pressure on the spirit of God's servant that it led from continual heaviness to:

Continual Heartbreak

“I have...continual grief in my heart” (Rom. 9:2). Sheer heaviness of spirit brought him to tears—yes, real tears, not crocodile tears. On another occasion he could remind his brethren that “for three years” he “did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

Paul was not the only man who wept for souls. There was the Master Himself, who stands alone in His continual sorrow and anguish of heart for souls. We read that He was a Man of “vehement cries and tears” (Heb. 5:7). He was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3).

From the Gospels we learn that He wept over *individuals*. At Lazarus's grave, “He groaned in the spirit and was troubled... . Jesus wept” (John 11:33, 35). We do not believe He wept because of Lazarus's death. As the omniscient One, He knew that His friend was now free from sin and suffering, and in the highest interests He could not wish him back. His sympathetic heart must have shared the sorrow of Martha and Mary, but we are not satisfied to think that this was why He troubled His spirit, groaned, and wept. We are more disposed to believe that His loving heart yearned and travailed for the hypocritically religious, self-righteous individuals who stood around that grave.

Then there were occasions when He wept over *crowds*. Mark tells us that “Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark 6:34; see also Matt. 9:36; 14:14).

That word *compassion* is one that people do not like to examine etymologically. They would say that it is bad taste. But Matthew and Mark knew what it meant when they first wrote it. It conveys the idea of yearning. The Greeks held the view that all emotion was centered in the bowels so that to be deeply concerned and moved was to have “the bowels of compassion.” It denotes the inward pain and yearning that a mother experiences over her wandering child. Are we moved in this fashion, as we look upon the multitudes that surge down the streets of our modern towns and cities, as sheep having no shepherd?

Jesus also wept over *cities*. Think of the occasion when He cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matt. 23:37–38).

The thought that this great, proud, religious city had not discerned the day of her visitation and was about to reject and crucify the Messiah broke the Savior's heart. He, who could have sent legions of angels to slaughter man and beast and raze to the ground the stately buildings, wept instead over a lost city.

History is replete with illustrations of genuine soul-winners who have shared this same passion. After all, if anyone can say, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20 KJV), surely his outward manifestation of concern should witness to the compassionate Christ who dwells within.

Robert Murray McCheyne was one such man. His tears and travail for souls are still spoken of in Scotland, even though he died more than a century ago.

General Booth wept his way into human hearts. On one occasion he “received a message from one of his captains that the work was so hard he could make no progress. The General sent back a reply of two words: ‘Try tears.’”²

The psalmist was well acquainted with the principle of fruit out of travail when he wrote, “Those who sow in tears / Shall reap in joy” (Ps. 126:5).

It is well to challenge our hearts as to whether we know anything of such travail and tears for souls. How many times have we asked God to put our “tears into” His “bottle” (Ps. 56:8), knowing that such weeping has represented, not sorrow for backsliding, not sorrow for our sin, but a heartbreaking concern for men and women out of Christ?

The apostle shows us here that his concern for his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh was not only real and regular but also:

A Redemptive Passion for Souls

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:3).

This is where we begin to flounder. The words of truth and experience find their deepest level here. In our attempt to try to expound this statement, we find our key in the word *redemptive*. We are told to redeem “the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16), by which the apostle means working out in everyday living the triumph of the redemptive act of Christ at Calvary.

A redemptive passion is oneness with Christ in the fellowship of His suffering (see Phil. 3:10). This fellowship is not suffering for sin, which deserves punishment; nor is it so much suffering in service, which costs persecution. It is sharing in the outworking of God's purpose in redemption in the winning of souls, and this means passion.

It is only such a redemptive passion which:

Adopts the Shame of Winning the Lost

Paul referred to his nation as “my brethren, my countrymen” (Rom. 9:3). He was prepared to identify himself with those he was trying to win. While he recognized that, as a nation, they had been favored with unique privileges and glory, he had to share the shame that they were now:

Blind. “Blindness in part has happened to Israel” (Rom. 11:25). Oh, the shame of it! Once the people were the recipients of divine glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; but now they were spiritually blind.

Boastful. “Seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). Paul accepted the shame of this pride, arrogance, and hardness of heart as if it were his own.

Bitter. Looking back into history, the apostle quoted Elijah, saying, “They have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars” (Rom. 11:3; compare 1

Kings 19:10, 14). Paul's own experience shows how they had despised him, beaten him, stoned him, and attempted to take his life. But such was his redemptive concern for his brethren and kinsmen that he was prepared to adopt their shame. He was willing to become “as a Jew” in order that he might win the Jew (1 Cor. 9:20).

This redemptive passion goes further, however. It:

Accepts the Sacrifice of Winning the Lost

“I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ” (Rom. 9:3). This is beyond us. We cannot understand it. All we can say is that Paul was prepared to go to hell if by that means his kinsmen in the flesh could be saved. Such a desire could never be fulfilled because it would involve robbery of himself from the Lord who bought him; and having been redeemed, he could not be lost (John 10:28–30). Yet Paul was sober in making that statement. In fact, he was speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We can only conclude, therefore, that Paul intended to convey the extraordinary reaches of sacrifice to which he was prepared to go.

For the Savior, this redemptive concern meant the tasting of death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Thank God, such a tasting of death never has to be repeated! This is the aspect of the redemptive work of Christ in which no one can share. And yet, let us make no mistake about it, there is an *outworking* of that redemptive suffering in which the believer can participate. Indeed, without fellowship with Christ on this level, we can never become the effective soul-winners God has intended us to be. Paul spoke of this suffering as filling up “what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24).

Dr. J. H. Jowett reminds us that “the gospel of a broken heart demands the ministry of bleeding hearts.” And again, “As soon as we cease to bleed we cease to bless.”³ We must bleed if we would be ministers of the saving blood.

When Charles Peace, that notorious murderer, saw for the first time the significance of the cross of Christ, he said, “If I believed what you and the church of God *say* that you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be, on hands and knees and think it worth while living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell like that!”⁴

“General Booth once said that he would like to send all his candidates for officership to Hell for twenty-four hours as the chief part of their training.”⁵ Only thus would they be able to accept the sacrifice of winning the lost.

Out of the sacrifice of winning the lost, however, we notice that a redemptive passion triumphantly:

Anticipates the Satisfaction of Winning the Lost

Later, continuing this same subject, the apostle Paul said, “My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). To carry through this work of redemption, our Lord “endured the cross, despising the shame” for “the joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2). It was the joy not only of doing the will of God but of “bringing many sons to glory” (Heb. 2:10). This is the crown of rejoicing for every true soul-winner. This is the promised resurrection from the depths of shame and sacrifice into which the soul-winner has to plunge himself in his search for sinners away from God. No wonder the soul-winner's joy will be full when he stands before his Lord in the glory land with those he has won to the Master through his faithful witness.

What a ministry, then, is this redemptive passion! Do you know anything about it in your life? Or is this language strange and unintelligible? Do you know what it is to suffer with Christ?

This concern for the lost is not a matter of emotional stirrings. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as we deliberately accept this fellowship of suffering and, through ever increasing fellowship with Christ, learn

something of the meaning of His cross, the value He sets on the human soul, the eternal doom of the lost that He has disclosed, the nearness of His return, which He has foretold, and the inestimable loss or gain at His judgment seat, which He has declared, awaits the believer.

Only when we are willing to pay the price of this soul-saving ministry can we honestly pray those solemn words of Amy Carmichael:

O for a passionate passion for souls!

O for a pity that yearns!

O for the love that loves unto death!

O for the fire that burns!⁶

For Reflection and Response

1. What role does prayer have in your life? How is it related to your soul-winning efforts?
2. Do you have a list of people who are outside of Christ for whom you pray? If not, start a list.
3. How can we pray more *specifically* about soul-winning efforts, both personally and in our churches or ministries? List or discuss some specifics for which to pray.
4. Has God answered prayer in relation to your soul-winning efforts? When? How? Did you thank Him?

CHAPTER EIGHT



The Soul-Winner's Trials

Scriptures for Study

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19–21

He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every

wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

EPHESIANS 4:10–14

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

HEBREWS 5:12–14

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:1–6

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

HEBREWS 13:17

THE STUDY OF THE Scriptures, coupled with experience in evangelism, teaches us that the trials of the soul-winner cover three states of the convert's life.

The Trials of Winning the Convert

In his endeavor to win men and women to Christ, the apostle Paul said, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

If you look carefully at the context, you will observe that the writer refers to four classes of people of comprehensive significance, whom he was seeking to influence for Christ:

The Religionists—the Jews

“And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews” (1 Cor. 9:20).

An illustration of this is provided for us in Acts 16:1–3. Paul had gone to Lystra and had met there a certain disciple named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess and whose father was a Greek. And we read, “Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek” (Acts 16:3). Here Paul was behaving like a Jew in order to win the Jews.

The Moralists—Those under the Law

“To those who are under the law, as under the law” (1 Cor. 9:20).

Acts 21:17–26 provides an illustration of this. Paul was in Jerusalem, reporting on all that God was doing in and through him by the preaching of the free grace of God. But lest his approach should offend the moralists, he submitted to certain legal and ceremonial rites in order that he might win

those who were under the law. His Jewish brethren advised him to submit to the law of purifying, adding, “That all may know...that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law” (Acts 21:24). The record goes on to say, “Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them” (Acts 21:26).

The Worldings—Those without the Law

“To those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law” (1 Cor. 9:21).

An illustration of this is provided for us in Acts 17:16–34. This time Paul was in the heathen city of Athens, and his spirit was stirred within him because he saw the people wholly given over to idolatry. When provided with an opportunity to preach to the great masses of the city, he took full advantage of it; and his entire approach was one that would appeal to those without the law. He even quoted from their own poets in order to gain their ear (see Acts 17:28–29).

The Moral Weaklings—“the Weak”

“To the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak” (1 Cor. 9:22).

First Corinthians 8:9–13 provides an illustration of this. Paul was here addressing believers who were weak in faith, but the passage nonetheless gives us an insight into Paul's carefulness in becoming all things to all men that he might win some. His principle was that he would by no means use his liberty (power) in the gospel so as to become “a stumbling block to those who are weak” (1 Cor. 8:9).

In our attempt to win people in each of these categories, we may meet with four types of trial:

Furious Resistance. Stephen was confronted with such resistance and had

to declare, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51). And such was the fury and hatred in their hearts that “when they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth... . And they cast him out of the city and stoned him” (Acts 7:54, 58).

The soul-winner has to face all kinds of situations. The Lord Jesus forewarned that it would be so, and we must not be surprised if we meet such furious resistance (see John 15:18–23; 16:1–2).

Spurious Acceptance. Luke told a sad story of a certain man called Simon, of the city of Samaria, who was a sorcerer. When the gospel was preached, he gave heed and apparently believed, was baptized, and continued with Philip the evangelist. But his profession of faith was insincere. Deep down in his heart, he had not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He was only desirous of possessing the strange, miraculous power that he saw demonstrated by the apostles. His motive was entirely wrong. Peter detected this and, addressing him, said, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:20–23; compare vv. 9–24).

Curious Indifference. Paul was preaching at Athens and “when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked” (Acts 17:32). Until time is no more, there will always be the mockers who, with an air of indifference, laugh at matters of eternal consequence.

The same attitude of curious indifference is exemplified in another mood by Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, who, when face to face with spiritual issues, is reported to have “cared for none of those things” (Acts 18:17 KJV).

Serious Reluctance. In the same crowd at Athens were not only those who mocked but others who said, “We will hear you again on this matter” (Acts 17:32). They procrastinated.

Another instance of this serious reluctance is illustrated in the case of Felix, who, having heard Paul preach in power of “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,” trembled with fear but, when challenged to make some decision, answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you” (Acts 24:25).

Here, then, are some of the trials of winning the convert. Thank God, in spite of furious resistance, spurious acceptance, curious indifference, and serious reluctance, there are those who truly believe!

Even in Athens, after being mocked and set aside by some, Paul led others to Christ; for “some men joined him and believed.” Among them were notables like “Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (Acts 17:34).

The seed of the gospel may fall by the wayside, on stony ground, or among thorns; but some always falls on the good soil and springs up into “fruit,” “more fruit,” and “much fruit.” So along with the trials of winning the convert, there are also the triumphs.

The second stage of soul-winning involves the soul-winner in:

The Trials of Weaning the Convert

Paul's sorrow and trial, when writing to the believers at Corinth, was that he could not address them as mature Christians, even after a long period of time. They were still unweaned babes. Perhaps this is one of the most common trials of the soul-winner.

From the Word of God we learn that there are certain evidences that a babe in Christ has not been weaned. There is:

Unstableness in the Christian Life

Observe how this is described in Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian

Christians, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 4:14).

Unstableness in the Christian life means:

Being Easily Shifted. “Tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). The metaphor employed here is that of a ship tossed by the waves and carried hither and thither by every windy blast. It is descriptive of the changing thoughts, tempers, and tastes of spiritual childishness!

With characteristic unstableness, such babes in the Christian life establish so-called convictions at one moment, only to contradict them at a later moment. They can never speak with authority or confidence. Tossed to and fro, they are like mariners aboard a ship without compass, chart, or rudder.

Being Easily Seduced. “Carried about...by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 14:14). This indicates that unstable Christians are led astray in two ways:

- **Religious Cleverness.** “The trickery of men.” The term denotes the quickness, suddenness, and deceitfulness of the dice thrower. It is a warning against anything religious that is clever without being clear. Childlike, the unstable Christian will often be impressed and seduced by that which appeals to the senses only. How the convert needs to be warned of the tricks, stunts, and magic of certain religious cults and movements today!
- **Religious Craftiness.** “Cunning craftiness.” From the construction of this phrase it seems clear that Paul had in mind the deeper and more subtle forms of delusion. In all probability, “cunning craftiness” was the particular scheme of erroneous teaching that had already struck root in the soil of Asia Minor.

Such craftiness, devoted to the systematic plan of deceit in innumerable forms is still with us today. Think, for instance, of such deceptive systems as

Spiritualism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Scientology, the New Age movement, and the like.

Unskillfulness in the Christian Life

The writer to the Hebrews sums it up when he says, “Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe” (Heb. 5:13).

These words were addressed to those who had lost interest in the deeper truths of Christianity and were making the milk of the Word their only diet. Being mostly Jews, they were still in bondage to the rituals and traditions of their childhood days. How true this is of so many today! Saved for years but still drinking milk, still wrapped up in the baby garments of their first days in Christ!

Such unskillfulness in the Christian life involves:

Failure to Rightly Appreciate the Truth. The senses are not “exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). The popular milk-and-water ministry may be desired and enjoyed; but when it comes to pure, rich milk or the meat of the Word, it is not appreciated. Through lack of growth and experience in the word of righteousness, the babe in Christ has no discernment of truth.

Failure to Rightly Apply the Truth. “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe” (Heb. 5:13). “The word of righteousness” must signify fully developed Christian teaching. By being “unskilled in the word of righteousness,” the writer implies the inexperienced handling and applying of God's Word, or the very antithesis of that relevant injunction in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Unspirituality in the Christian Life

In that classic word picture of spiritual babyhood, recorded in 1 Corinthians 3, Paul tells us that the believer who never seems to pass the baby stage is unspiritual. Listen to his words: “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal [unspiritual], as to babes in Christ... . For you are still carnal [unspiritual]. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:1, 3).

Such unspirituality is marked by:

Unhealthy Discontent. “There [is] envy...among you” (1 Cor. 3:3). How accurate Paul is! For we all know how discontented and envious a child becomes when he ceases to be the center of attention and the object of interest. In a similar way, these Corinthian babes had become discontented through being envious of one another's hero speakers since such hero worship served to draw attention to themselves. To them the message the apostles preached was secondary; what really mattered was whether they belonged to a prominent section of the church. What unspirituality!

Unhealthy Discord. “There [is]...strife...among you” (1 Cor. 3:3). Watch a nursery of discontented babes, and it will not be long before you see discord and strife. The same is true in the church. Where there are those who refuse to grow up, one often finds discord and strife. Everything that happens and everyone who ministers become bones of contention.

Unhealthy Division. “There are...divisions among you” (1 Cor. 3:3). The apostle Paul speaks of the factions or cliques which these Christian babes had created. Instead of finding their center in Christ, they were saying, “I am of Paul”; “I am of Apollos” (1 Cor. 3:4); “I am of Cephas”; “I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 1:12). Think of it! Bringing Christ down to the level of others, instead of making Him the one and only Center of all true fellowship! Denominationalism and sectarianism are nothing new. Whether in Paul's day or in our day, they are a sure mark of spiritual babyhood. How repelling are these characteristics of unspirituality, and yet how often they are seen in the lives of our converts! The soul-winner's task must be to travail again and

again in prayer and instruction until the babes in Christ are weaned from these associations of spiritual childishness. The servant of God will find it costly business; many trials will beset his way, but how worthwhile to present every man perfect in Christ!

Even after the weaning of the convert, however, there are:

The Trials of Watching the Convert

Although the words of Hebrews 13:17, “Those who rule over you [or guide you],” refer primarily to the leaders in the church, doubtless soul-winners are included when the writer exhorts the believers to “obey” them, adding, “They watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

The trials of watching our converts include seeing them at times:

Backslide through Disobedience

Writing to the believers in Galatia, Paul the apostle had to ask them, “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7). Progress in the Christian life depends on obedience to revealed truth. If and when the convert fails to obey any given truth, then he backslides.

The life of liberty through the power of the Spirit had been clearly presented to these Galatian believers, but in spite of this, they had allowed the Judaizers, with their teaching, to drive them back into disobedience. Instead of standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, they had become entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

How true is the little chorus:

Trust and obey,
For there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey!¹

Backslide through Drifting

Addressing Jewish Christians who were in danger of backsliding because of enemy pressure, the writer to the Hebrews says, “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away” (Heb. 2:1). Through inattention and lack of discipline in spiritual matters, it is easy for Christians, young or old, to drift away—first imperceptibly but sooner or later indisputably. How the soul-winner needs to watch his children in the faith lest under his eyes they drift away from the things that they have heard!

Backslide through Discouragement

Later on in Hebrews, the Spirit of God exhorts all Christian people, saying, “Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12:3; compare vv. 1–4). Nothing leads to spiritual discouragement like the weariness and faintheartedness that come through “the hostility from sinners.” Our archenemy, Satan, has a subtle and effective way of wearing down the young convert by various forms of contradiction. The Lord Jesus summed it up when He talked about men who say all manner of evil against us falsely for His sake (Matt. 5:11).

If the soul-winner is watching carefully, he will detect the disobedience and counter it by stimulating new love and loyalty to Christ. He will notice the drifting and bring home to the young believer the solemn consequences of a life lacking in discipline and effectiveness. He will observe when the spirit of discouragement is attacking the newly committed Christian and will turn his eyes to Jesus; for it is only as we “consider Him” that we shall be saved from being “weary and faint” (Heb. 12:3) in our minds. “Looking unto Jesus”

(v. 2) is the secret of rising above fears, failures, and frustrations.

These are some of the trials the soul-winner is bound to encounter in his high and holy task of winning men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, they are to be faced and fought if the Savior's commission—to make disciples of all nations—is to be fulfilled. Our encouragement must be the knowledge that His presence will be with us always, and the power of His Holy Spirit will enable us, even unto the consummation of the age.

For Reflection and Response

1. What trials have you faced in your soul-winning experience? Be specific?
2. How do the trials of the soul-winner relate or compare to the trials of a parent? Discuss or think through some comparisons.
3. If someone you knew was discouraged as a soul-winner, what could you do to encourage him or her? What Scriptures could you use?

CHAPTER NINE



The Soul-Winner's Temptations

Scriptures for Study

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

JOHN 4:34–35

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

JAMES 2:1-9

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3–6

THE WORD OF GOD makes plain that the temptations of the soul-winner can be spiritual, social, or sexual. In each of these realms, temptation can be intensely real. It behooves us to examine the approaches from which it can come so as to be prepared for adequate resistance and victory. For the soul-winner to be forewarned in this respect is to be forearmed.

Let us, then, consider:

The Spiritual Temptations of the Soul-Winner

While temptations in the spiritual realm are many and varied, they are doubtless included in the four means which the enemy has chosen to use against the soul-winner.

Spiritual Carelessness

Solomon's words in Proverbs 29:18 express a solemn principle, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV). No passion for lost souls is the consequence of no vision. Jeremiah said, “My eyes bring suffering to my soul” (Lam. 3:51).

We see how this is illustrated in the case of the disciples when our Lord

introduced them to the need of Samaria. Because their eyes were blind to the fields white unto harvest, their hearts were unaffected. Indeed, they marveled that the Master should talk to a woman who was a Samaritan. The fact that she was bound in sin, needing liberation, did not occur to them.

What the Savior saw certainly affected His heart. He could say, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:34–35).

How easy it is to be affected by spiritual carelessness! It is a temptation we must watch carefully.

Spiritual Prayerlessness

Where there is carelessness, prayerlessness follows; and Jesus said, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1).

Where there is no passion for souls, there is no prayer. The Lord Jesus clearly taught this when He said, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37–38).

Even as He uttered these words, “He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

When the apostle Paul expressed his concern for his kindred according to the flesh (Rom. 9:1–5), he continued, saying, “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1).

When we yield to the temptation of prayerlessness, this is sure evidence that we have lost our vision and passion for souls.

Spiritual Fearfulness

As carelessness leads to prayerlessness, so prayerlessness leads to fearfulness. When the disciples were too weak and wayward to pray, they hid themselves behind closed doors “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). Well does Solomon say, “The fear of man brings a snare” (Prov. 29:25).

Perhaps this fearfulness to open our mouths in confession of our faith or to take advantage of God-given opportunities for soul-winning is one of the most familiar and effective temptations of the enemy. Only the fullness and anointing of the Holy Spirit for service can overcome this paralyzing fear.

Spiritual Weariness

Laboring against fear weakens the soul-winner. In the knowledge of this fact, the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian believers, saying, “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:9).

The same thought, in another context, occurs in Hebrews 12:3–4: “Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

This exhaustion is not so much physical or mental fatigue in the work of God as a weariness of it. Literally, it means “to be beaten out” and leads to giving up or failing in duty.

Though these spiritual temptations are linked together, it is possible for the soul-winner to be attacked by them singly or jointly.

With the spiritual temptations, we must also think of:

The Social Temptations of the Soul-Winner

The social temptations have mainly to do with the soul-winner's reactions to:

Social Distinctions

It is perilously possible for a genuine lover of souls to be affected by social distinctions in his work of winning men and women to Christ. By social distinctions we mean such differences as may be created by:

Race and Religion. The apostle Paul, as a true evangelist, faced this problem and could say, “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise... . For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:14, 16).

Notice that Paul mentioned the Greeks, who were the cultured people, with a classical civilization; the barbarians, that is, the people of all other nations; the wise, the intellectual people; the unwise, the simple people; the Jews, the religious people. These man-made distinctions made no difference to his sense of indebtedness to preach the gospel. He recognized that “there is no partiality with God” (Rom. 2:11).

Peter had to learn this lesson before God could use him. At one time he was such a prejudiced Jew that on no account would he entertain the thought of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. God had to give him a vision in which he saw all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air mingled together; and the command was, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” Then we read that “a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common’” (Acts 10:11–16). Immediately following this vision came an urgent appeal for spiritual help from the Gentile Cornelius, and Peter realized that this was a call from God. When he arrived at Cornelius's house, he opened his mouth and said, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34).

It is sad and serious to see how social distinctions still affect so-called Christian workers today. Race and religion still influence the appeal and approach of those who claim to be lovers of souls.

Rank and Riches. Social distinctions arise not only from the differences of

race and religion but also from the differences created by rank and riches. Perhaps this is one of the greatest curses in this age of materialism.

Even in the days of the apostle James, this was a problem to be reckoned with. See what he has to say in James 2:1–9. High-minded people in the church would say to those who wore fine clothes, “You sit here in a good place,” and whisper to the poor, “‘Stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool.’” But James asked, “Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?...But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (2:4, 9).

In 1 Timothy 6:1–12, Paul deals with the same subject and the young man Timothy is warned that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (v. 10).

There can be no greater tragedy than that of a soul-winner whose motives and ministry are affected by material gain or social betterment.

Social distinctions of this kind inevitably lead some soul-winners into the temptation of:

Social Defeatism

The existence of social distinctions can create in some Christian workers a sense of social defeatism. Instead of viewing men and women—religious or irreligious, intellectual or simple, rich or poor, cultured or uncultured—as sinners needing the Savior, they allow the superficial distinctions of men to defeat the outworking of God's redeeming love, which saves without respect to persons.

The Bible says, “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... . For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’” (Rom. 3:22–23;

10:12–13).

No honest soul-winner will deny the fact that there have been occasions when he has been paralyzed by a sense of defeatism when contemplating an approach to someone intellectually above him, or perhaps someone socially beneath him. The temptation to be defeated by who people are, or what people are, must be overcome by the Spirit of power as well as by the gospel of power.

Anticipating the preaching of the gospel in Rome, where every distinction was conceivable, Paul could say, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

If the enemy of souls does not attack us along the lines of spiritual temptations and social temptations, then he will employ:

The Sexual Temptations of the Soul-Winner

This kind of temptation is not sufficiently studied and mastered in Christian circles today, with the result that tragedy after tragedy occurs.

There are two principal aspects of sexual temptation in the work of soul-winning:

The Temptation to Ignore Sex Appeal

Some well-intentioned Christians think that because they now serve the Master, the factor of sex appeal no longer enters into their thinking, speaking, or acting. As a consequence of this, they face the danger of being defenseless against sexual temptation and are often involved in sin—in thought if not in deed (see Matt. 5:27–28).

That great soul-winner, the apostle Paul, realized the importance of keeping his body under control. Listen to his words of personal discipline as

recorded in 1 Corinthians 9:27: “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders these words as follows, “I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified” [that is, disqualified for service; the salvation of the soul is not in view here].

Without such self-mastery or personal discipline, even the Christian worker can be involved in moral sin. Intimate contact with people cannot be entertained without involving the factor of sex appeal; hence the need for watchfulness, discipline, and mastery.

The Temptation to Incite Sex Appeal

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3–6, the apostle Paul is addressing Christian men and women when he says, “This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.”

God's purpose for His people, and especially His servants, is that in all social relationships our bodies are to be possessed and preserved in sanctification and honor. That is to say, our bodies are to be separated unto God and made to appear honorable before men.

This manner of living certainly involves the discipline of sexual appetites. The Scripture we have just read warns that no man should defraud his brother in the matter of inciting these temptations.

The Greek word used here suggests three ways in which sexual desire can be incited:

By defrauding—that is, exciting hungers that cannot be honorably

satisfied.

By oppressing—that is, exerting a superior and more forceful personality over a weaker one, until it is sapped of initiative, individuality, and vitality.

By overreaching—that is, exceeding the laws of chastity and holiness until there is disaster.

Unless we are on our guard, it is perilously possible to defraud, oppress, or overreach, even in the work of soul-winning. This applies not only to the relationships of opposite sexes but also to those of the same sex. To behave in this fashion is to be judged by God, for “the Lord is the avenger of all such” (1 Thess. 4:6).

To be armed by God against sexual temptation in the work of soul-winning, there is negative as well as positive instruction in the Word of God:

- The Negative Instruction. “Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:14). And again, “Flee...youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22). In our thinking, speaking, and acting, we are to be ever watchful of anything that makes provision for the fulfilling of fleshly lusts. And when necessary, we are to flee from them.
- The Positive Instruction. “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). To know the conscious and constant fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives, especially when engaged in the sacred work of winning men and women to Christ, is the secret of possessing our vessels in sanctification and honor. *Only the Holy Spirit can sanctify sex appeal and sublimate sexual appetite.* When He fills the life, we know what it is to be separated unto God and made honorable before men.

We have seen the peculiar temptations that beset the soul-winner in his endeavor to seek and find men and women for Christ. How relevant, then, is the apostle's word to us when he says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted

beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:12–13).

Let us ever lean heavily on the faithfulness of God and watch carefully for His way of escape, lest having preached to others, we should be disqualified at the judgment seat of Christ.

For Reflection and Response

1. Take an honest look at your life. What temptations have you faced recently? What way(s) of escape were available to you (1 Cor. 10:12–13)? Did you escape? If not, why not? What needs to change in your future dealings with these temptations?
2. Look back over the temptations presented in this chapter. What temptations had you not thought of before? Which ones concern you the most? Why?
3. What can we learn from Hebrews 2:14–18 and 4:12–16 in relation to the temptations we face? How can we receive the grace and help we need from the Lord? What does this look like in real life? What encouragement can we gain from Hebrews 11–12 as well?
4. How can the personal life of the soul-winner help or hinder witnessing? How does the knowledge of the indwelling Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit impact the way we view our personal lives? How can we rely on the Lord more intentionally and consistently on a daily basis?

CHAPTER TEN



The Soul-Winner's Triumphs

Scriptures for Study

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia. Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:12–17

WHATEVER TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS may beset the soul-winner, he

can always know what it is to triumph. His attitude should be that of the great apostle when he exclaimed, “Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14).

Paul was on one of his soul-winning journeys when he gave expression to these words. He had intended to travel from Ephesus to Troas to preach the gospel. In fact, he had arrived at Troas, and a wonderful door of opportunity had been opened to him. But this pioneer evangelist was troubled and restless in his spirit. He had hoped to meet Titus in Troas and learn from him the latest news of the disturbing happenings that were taking place in the church at Corinth. But Titus was nowhere to be found; so, leaving Troas, Paul proceeded into Macedonia where he apparently found Titus. What his colleague had to tell him so thrilled his heart that he burst into this glorious doxology. In effect he said, “The Lord has scored another victory; rejoice with me. ‘Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ.’”

For successful soul-winning, one must be able to react equally to situations of apparent failure or success with the song of triumph.

Such victorious soul-winning implies:

Sharing a Triumphant Freedom in Christ

Weymouth renders Paul's words thus: “But to God be the thanks who in Christ ever heads our triumphal procession, and by our hands waves in every place that sweet incense, the knowledge of Him” (2 Cor. 2:14).¹

The apostle is employing in this verse the figure of a Roman triumph. While he had not yet been to Rome, Paul doubtless had heard of the great celebration days when conquerors returning to the city were watched by the emperor and the thronging crowds as the victorious army paraded solemnly yet gloriously down the great Via Sacra (the principal street of ancient Rome) to the Capitoline Hill.

G. Campbell Morgan points out “in such a Roman triumph, the conspicuous figures were those of the victor and the vanquished. The victor rode in triumph, and the vanquished was often chained to his chariot wheels; and the whole procession was accompanied by the burning of incense.” Dr. Morgan adds, “Without dogmatizing, I believe that Paul here was viewing those engaged in the [gospel] ministry as the victors...describing their work as that of a triumphant march, and the vanquished, those...they had mastered [who were] accompanying on the march.”²

In these processional marches, there were two categories of prisoners:

The Commended Prisoners

These were men (and even women) who had accepted the conquest of their masters and were rejoicing as they moved along, chained to the chariot wheels. On the great day of the procession, the commended prisoners were always set free, but they did not go home to their own country. They stayed with their masters. In the language of the slave of the Old Testament, their decision would be, “I love my master,...I will not go out free” (Exod. 21:5).

This is one of the joys of every soul-winner—when he returns from his soul-winning opportunities with prisoners of Jesus Christ chained, as it were, to the chariot wheels! There is no joy in Christian work like that of returning from the scene of battle with those previously bound by the enemy, now enslaved to Christ. We need to recognize afresh that there is no greater freedom than that of captivity to Jesus Christ.

George Matheson expressed it beautifully in his hymn:

Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.³

In Paul's day those commended prisoners realized that their conquerors were leading them into a new experience of life. Many of them, due to their

own contexts and circumstances, were only too glad to be freed by a great power like that of Rome.

In a similar way men and women who are set free from Satan's bondage welcome the privilege of being mastered by the King of kings and the Lord of lords for His service is perfect freedom.

Then there were:

The Condemned Prisoners

These were rebellious captives who, for that very reason, were marked out for life imprisonment or execution. It is solemn yet necessary for the soul-winner to recognize that, if he is to follow in the train of the Savior's triumph, the effect of his witness to the conquering Savior will mean commendation for those who accept Christ and condemnation for those who reject Him. This triumphant image the apostle Paul uses and the solemn truths it communicates are not reasons to shirk the task of soul-winning. On the contrary, we find encouragement for the task when we realistically understand that some will reject the message. In other words, we should not be surprised or give up when we experience the rejection of our gospel witness and we see people refuse to acknowledge or accept our sovereign Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture clearly teaches that not all who hear the gospel will respond in genuine repentance and saving faith. People will accept the Savior and surrender to Him, and people will reject the Savior and refuse to own Him as Savior and Lord. Ultimately—and this is the point—in either case, the triumphant Savior and His freedom are celebrated and God is glorified.

Victorious soul-winning, in the next place, means:

Shedding a Triumphant Fragrance of Christ

“For,” declares the apostle, “we are a fragrance of Christ grateful to God in those whom He is saving and in those who are perishing; to the last-named an odour of death predictive of death, and to the others an odour of life predictive of life” (2 Cor. 2:15–16, Weymouth).⁴

In these triumphal processions the prisoners carried censers of burning incense. As they waved them to and fro, the fragrance was diffused through the city, and everybody knew that the victors with their vanquished were marching down the Via Sacra.

We, too, as soul-winners share in a triumphal march; and as the Incense ascends,

The Name of Our Conquering Lord Is Exalted

“[His] name is ointment poured forth” (Song 1:3). His name spells salvation and deliverance, for at His birth the angel announced, “You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

And later, Peter could declare in one of his sermons, “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

It is the name of exaltation and triumph, for “God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9–11).

Nothing should thrill our heart more than to hear those who have been won to Christ acclaiming His rights, doing Him honor, exulting in His glories, speaking well of His character and courage, and magnifying the name which is above every name.

The Fame of Our Conquering Lord Is Extended

Every prisoner chained to the chariot wheels extends the fame of our Savior. The more prisoners there are, the greater the volume of incense that wafts afar the fame of this One who saves without respect of persons. They may be rich or poor, wise or simple, young or old:

Red and yellow, black and white,
All are precious in His sight.⁵

John the Seer envisages such a scene as this in a day yet to come, when those captive to Jesus Christ shall sing a new song, saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll,...for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9–10).

And again, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12).

This ascending fragrance will be the aroma of life unto life to those who have capitulated to the sovereignty of Christ; and, alas, the aroma of death unto death to those who have rejected Him, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). The condemned prisoners, having reached the foot of the Capitoline Hill, were ushered into an underground prison. To them the wafted incense was an odor of death unto death. Once again, terrifying as this thought is, it must always be accepted in the context of the Savior's triumph.

Our soul-winning is not only the sharing of a triumphant freedom in Christ and the shedding of a triumphant fragrance of Christ; it also constitutes:

Showing a Triumphant Faithfulness to Christ

The apostle goes on to say, “We are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ [of Christ]” (2 Cor. 2:17).

As we follow in the train of the Savior's triumph, sharing as victors with Him, we show forth our loyalty to:

The Message of the Gospel

“We are not, as so many, peddling the word of God” (2 Cor. 2:17). The idea implicit in the word *peddling* was that of hucksters or tavern traffickers. These people kept saloons and were notorious for adding water to the wine, thus corrupting or diluting it, and therefore making money under false pretenses.

Paul was aware of the presence in the church of compromising teachers and evangelists who dared to adulterate or water down the Word of the gospel.

Here is a temptation to which any soul-winner might succumb; but to do so is to cease to move in the train of the Savior's triumph.

The joy of soul-winning is not only that of seeing men and women saved through the power of the gospel but also of watching the converts “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

The saintly John could say, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4).

God, make us ever faithful to the message of the gospel.

Triumphant soul-winning, however, implies loyalty not only to the message of the gospel but also to:

The Ministry of the Gospel

Notice how our text continues, “As of sincerity...we speak in the sight of

God in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:17). The New Living Translation renders it, “We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us.”

As soul-winners, we have a wonderful ministry. With all its joys and sorrows, trials and triumphs, we are solemnly responsible to men and accountable to God. Like the elders referred to in Hebrews 13:17, we “watch out for...souls, as those who must give account,” that we may “do so with joy and not with grief.”

Looking back on his soul-winning work in the city of Thessalonica, with heaven in view, Paul could say, “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19–20).

Surely, to present to the Master in heaven men and women we have won here on the earth must be the triumph and joy of all soul-winners. On the other hand, could there be a greater embarrassment or shame than to face the judgment seat of Christ empty-handed, “not one soul with which to greet Him?”⁶

What an incentive this is to be loyal to the ministry of the gospel day by day until we see our Savior in glory!

For Reflection and Response

1. What does it mean to you personally to be led “in triumph in Christ” (see 2 Cor. 2:12–17)?
2. How does the idea of loyalty relate to the triumph of the soul-winner?
3. How does the biblical requirement of faithfulness for the soul-winner compare to the common ideas of being “successful”?
4. How does soul-winning fit into your priorities?

Conclusion

Scripture for Study

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known

to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

JOHN 15:1-17

WE HAVE CONSIDERED TEN important aspects of soul-winning. These studies are by no means exhaustive. It is our hope, though, that these principles, which we believe to be indispensable, will help us all “walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). We hope, also, that these studies will increase the desire and resolve of our readers to be faithful and fruitful soul-winners. And it is on this subject of fruitfulness that we want to conclude. Why? Because our Lord desires that we be fruitful for His glory.

Within the special moments recorded in John 13-17, the Lord said to His disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and *bear fruit*, and that your *fruit* should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:16). Whether one thinks of this fruitfulness throughout John 15 specifically in terms of discipling and soul-winning (probably the primary meaning in verse 16) or in terms of character and conduct (also true to Scripture), fruitfulness is our Lord's design for us as disciples and soul-winners. Let's consider this fruitfulness that the Lord desires and purposes for our lives.

The Picture Used for Fruitfulness

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:1-2).

Before our Lord Jesus made His comments concerning the importance of

bearing fruit, He taught His disciples by using the allegory or picture of the True Vine (Himself), the Vinedresser (God the Father), the branches (disciples), and the fruit (the result of true discipleship).

The imagery used would certainly have been familiar to His disciples. Jesus was using a picture common to everyday life. At the same time, the imagery was also used in the Old Testament, often referring to God's people (ex. Isa. 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:1-8; Hos. 10:1-2). So, the disciples would have understood the basic meaning of Jesus' picture and comparison. Jesus' description of Himself as “the *true* vine” certainly would have emphasized His position as the true source of life.

The Priority Given to Fruitfulness

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... . By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples... . You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you” (John 15:2, 8, 16).

Jesus' picture and teaching emphasizes the importance of fruitfulness. The priority of fruitfulness can be seen by moving through these verses. First, Jesus gives the reason for the removal of branches; they are bearing no fruit. Second, He explains the purpose of pruning the branches—to encourage the growth of more fruit. Third, He tells us what brings glory to the Father—the producing of much fruit. And finally, Jesus reveals His intention in choosing His disciples—that they will bear fruit that will remain.

There is no question that the goal of the Vinedresser is fruitfulness, and this is true for the life of the disciple as well.

The Power Presented for Fruitfulness

“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:4-6).

Jesus makes clear the secret for fruitfulness. The power to bear fruit is found in the Vine and in the branches' relationship to and dependence upon the Vine. Two negative statements emphasize clearly that the power for fruitfulness is in the Vine (Jesus Himself): “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me” (John 15:4), and “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

This second utterance, coming at the end of an affirmation about “abiding” in the Lord, could not be stronger. Jesus declares that “nothing” can be done without Him, and He is speaking especially about bearing fruit. Jesus, therefore, proclaims Himself as the *Source* of power and the *Secret* of power.

This has been our message throughout this study as we have considered the secret of soul-winning. Jesus is Himself the one who supplies the power; He is the one who produces life and fruitfulness through us. And whether you think in terms of the fruit of character and Christlikeness or the fruit of making disciples, fruitfulness depends on Christ Himself. By the way, “character fruit” ultimately leads to “discipleship fruit.”

The Process Necessary for Fruitfulness

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:2-5).

A process is necessary to produce fruit, more fruit, much fruit, and fruit that remains.

There Is Pruning

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2, ff).

Jesus speaks of the Vinedresser's work of “pruning” the branches. This is done to deal with unproductive branches and also to help productive branches produce more fruit. The cleansing that Jesus refers to in verse 3 gives us some insight into what this pruning process is. We have to be cleansed by “the Word.” The image of pruning, though, may speak of anything God may use to cut away hindrances and cleanse us for growth. No matter how difficult the pruning may be, the Vinedresser is committed to the process of helping the branches be more fruitful. We must be open to the pruning work of our Lord to enable us to be fruitful.

There Must Be Abiding

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing... . As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will

abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:4-5, 9-10).

Throughout this passage of Scripture, there is an emphasis on the relationship of the Vine to the branches and the branches to the Vine. This relationship must be recognized and maintained in order for fruitfulness to take place. This is the key truth in this passage. “Abiding” is part of the process necessary for fruitfulness to become a reality.

Abiding indicates a relationship of essential dependence on the part of the disciple to his Lord. Just as the branch has to stay connected to the Vine in order to gain the power for fruitfulness, so the disciple must abide and remain in the Lord. This is a dependence on the Lord that calls for:

- Abiding in the Lord (John 15:4, 7)
- Abiding in His Word (John 15:7)
- Abiding in His Love (John 15:9)

Abiding indicates a responsibility of specific obedience on the part of the disciple to his Lord (John 15:9-13, 17). Jesus makes clear that this relationship of abiding depends on the disciples' keeping His commandments. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love” (John 15:10). In context, the emphasis is on the commandment to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Thus, it is necessary for the disciple to maintain a walk of dependence on and obedience to the Lord to be fruitful.

Jesus is speaking of a close, intimate relationship with His disciples, whom He refers to as His “friends” (John 15:14-15). This friendship with the Master is the necessary process for fruitfulness. What a pathway to blessing! Such intimacy with our Lord should be our greatest desire; indeed, it is our greatest privilege. At the same time, it is the means for spiritual power and productivity in our lives. True intimacy with our Lord is the “secret” to spiritual power and fruitfulness.

The Purposes Achieved through Fruitfulness

“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples... . These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full... . You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another” (John 15:8, 11, 16-17).

Fruitfulness is certainly presented as a priority in this teaching of our Lord. But there is more. As we bear fruit, other purposes are achieved in and through the life of the disciple: God is glorified (John 15:8); discipleship is verified (John 15:8); joy is realized (John 15:11); and prayers are authorized (John 15:7, 16).

As we have seen, our Lord wants us to be fruitful as disciples. In whatever way you interpret the specific words *fruit* or *bear fruit* in John 15:2, this teaching of our Lord is vital to a clear understanding of His work in and through our lives. It is certainly true that the Lord wants us to be fruitful disciples, and we would add fruitful soul-winners. For, ultimately, a fruitful disciple will be a fruitful soul-winner. We need to leave the results in God's hands because salvation is His work. Our job is to allow the Lord to do His work through us. Because the Lord is at work in and through us, we can be confident that His priority for our lives is fruit and fruitfulness. This is why we were chosen by Jesus and this is what the Father is working to produce.

The constant theme of this book has been that true fruitfulness in the arena of soul-winning is only possible as we look to Jesus, the Source and Secret of soul-winning. If we depend on Him and obey Him, we will “abide” in Him and know His power.

Stay connected. Maintain that relationship. Then, see what our Lord can and will do through you. He is the secret of all fruitfulness. He is the secret of

soul-winning.

APPENDIX

Steps to Salvation: How to Receive Christ

Confess ➡ ***That I am a sinner.***

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

“All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way.” (Isaiah 53:6)

Realize ➡ ***That I can neither change
myself nor save myself.***

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)

“A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 2:16)

Believe ➡ ***That Christ died to take away the guilt of all my sin.***

“He Himself bore [my] sins in His body on the tree.” (1 Peter 2:24 HCSB)

“Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” (1 Peter 3:18)

That Christ lives to be my all-sufficient Savior.

“Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior.” (Acts 5:31)

“He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives.” (Hebrews 7:25 HCSB)

Receive ➡ ***The Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.***

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and

opens the door, I will come in.” (Revelation 3:20)

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” (John 1:12)

Trust ➡ ***Him to cleanse me from all my sin.***

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Yield ➡ ***To Him as the Lord of my life and trust Him to live His victorious life in me.***

“I beseech you ... that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God... . And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:1-2)

Thank ➡ ***Him for answering my prayer and for saving me according to His promises.***

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
(Romans 10:9)

“God, who cannot lie, promised.” (Titus 1:2)

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A mid-twentieth century classic, The Secret of Soul Winning, is now revised with fresh insights on the sacred act of personal evangelism. This time-tested practical advice on how to share the good news of Jesus Christ, still as relevant as when it was first written, will greatly inspire a new generation of disciples.



"From a heart that has been strangely and wonderfully warmed by the Spirit of God, Stephen Olford brings us practical suggestions about how to win men to Christ. I am confident that no one can prayerfully read this book without being a better Christian and without being adequately equipped to . . . save souls from death by the help of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us."

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"The Bible says the soul-winner is wise. That being so, Stephen Olford was a man greatly endowed with wisdom. This volume pulsates with holy fire, biblical truth, and spiritual motivation . . . It comes from a loving heart of a practical soul-winner who has left a remarkable record behind him."

—ADRIAN ROGERS (1931–2005)



STEPHEN OLFORD (1918–2004) was an internationally known minister, born in Zambia and served churches in England and the United States. Often called "the preacher's preacher," he influenced countless lives through television, radio, and the founding of Olford Ministries International.

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