



The
William Booth
Collection

FISHING FOR MEN 4

DECEMBER, 1909

AGAINST PHYSICAL FORCE

To many, anything approaching physical force, of undue pressure of any kind, is exceedingly' repugnant. Push them 'up to taking a course against their own will, and they will be proportionately moved to go in the opposite direction, and that for no other reason than this compulsion. Leave it to their own honour, as it were, to volunteer; dare them to act on the courage of their own convictions; to go forwards if they go there alone and you will get at the strongest instincts of their nature. If these go at all they will go on that line.

With some you will not be able to go in this direction without such irritation and loss of temper as will effectually destroy your chance of success. The sinners will get up and leave the building, and seek to justify their own course by describing your urgency as an undue interference with the right of private judgment. They think they have a right to sin against God, and go to Hell, if they prefer that course. You do not think so. But that won't help you with these, and you must be all things to all men. You must watch the risings of this angry mood, and at the first appearance of impatience smooth it down and leave them with a kind word, and hope for better things when you come back to them again.

With others a little gentle pressure will be helpful. They require it. They feel it ought to come. They have wanted to be saved, off and on, perhaps for years. They have wished they could wake up some morning and find that they had changed sides and left the world and started for Heaven, and that all their family and companions knew it. Now, here is a chance straight before them, but their timidity holds them back, and to be taken by the hand by these Salvationists, who they feel love their souls, and led across the line of decision, is just what they need; and they will yield to your importunity and fall at the Master's feet, and bless you for the little compulsion you have used in getting them through the Straight Gate. Sometimes it is lawful, nay, necessary, to carry the penitents forwards. The resistance of the spirit and the inward conflict rob them of their physical strength; they cannot go if they would, and there is no alternative but to carry them out and lay them down before the Cross.



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The Devil Against You

The main body of resistance to the Penitent-form, and to that decision which it sets forth, comes, without doubt, directly from the Devil. If, in any meetings, or under any circumstances that can possibly transpire in the history of a soul, he is likely to use his utmost skill and to exert his mightiest power, surely it would be in gatherings the avowed purpose of which is the rescue of the captives out of his hands, and where the most straightforward measures that can be devised are used to accomplish this purpose. The presence of Satan and his emissaries is to be expected in every such meeting, and their opposition counted upon.

When, therefore, the 'Fisher' is sure that a man wants to be delivered out of the hands of the Devil, and that he is really desirous of being saved, he is justified in going a long way in the direction of compulsion to effect rescue. Reasoning, and praying, and singing, and believing on the part of a congregation will help, and should be continued all the night through with all the force that can be commanded; but the 'Fisher' must personally and persistently fight the Devil himself. He must fight him with his own faith. He must lay hold of God and wield the sharp two edged sword of His truth with skill and without mercy. He must pull the perishing souls out of the fire by some means or other. The 'Fisher' who loves souls, and is determined to save them by all means, will go a long way in his resolute measures before either God, or the angels, or The General will be disposed to say, 'Hold your hand.'

The Penitent-form

When a penitent comes out and kneels down, he should be spoken to immediately. If he is not spoken to at once by the Soldiers, he will be by the Devil, and tempted to believe he has made a mistake coming out. He will feel as though everybody were looking at him, and perhaps get into such confusion of mind that when he is spoken to it will be of little use.

Let one of the most intelligent and experienced Soldiers speak to each penitent, taking one particular seeker under his charge. If he does not succeed in bringing him

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into liberty, let him find some other Soldier to assist him; but the Soldier who speaks first to a seeker should feel responsible for that seeker until he finds mercy and is handed over to the Sergeant to have his name taken down.

In advising a penitent, the following directions should be observed:

(a) Find out whether the seeker is really in earnest. If he has only come up as a matter of form, or to oblige some one who pressed him to do so, or because he thought it might do him some little good, or for any other reason save that of being in dead earnest to seek and find Salvation, at once go to work to bring him under the conviction that he needs. Bring him to repentance.

(b) If convinced that he is earnestly seeking forgiveness, find out if he is willing to give up sin; that is, so far as he knows it to be sin. Ask him plainly if he is willing to cease from all those ways and doings which he knows are displeasing to God. If not, you cannot go any further till you have made him willing. It is of no use going on to speak of the love of God, or the freeness of mercy, of the efficacy of the Blood, if he is holding on to something which he knows God condemns. He will get no hope till that is renounced. If he does get one, it will be a false one, and he would be a very great deal better without it. Be plain with him. Drive him up to the renunciation, no matter how dear or important the matter may seem to be. Show him that he must give up sin or perish. Always remember that what you want is not only- that men may be saved from going to Hell, but made good.

(c) Ask him if he is willing to come out and be avowedly the servant of God; ask him if he will become a Soldier and stand for Christ alone. While his heart is tender he will promise you anything he sees to be right, and by pledging himself to a Soldier's life you will do him and the Kingdom of God a great service. Push home upon him the declaration of the Master, 'If any man would be My disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.' Show him what that means, and if he is sincere, he will pledge himself to it right away.

(d) If the seeker has gone with you as far as this, offer, him Salvation in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Tell of the love of God, how Jesus died

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for him, and how He longs to save him. Specially set before him the declaration, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.'" Ask him if he really and honestly 'comes' to Christ; if he comes as well as he knows how. If he says he does, show him that Christ must receive him, seeing that He has said He would not cast such out. But when penitents are in earnest, and are willing to do the will of God as we have described, they will not ordinarily 'find much difficulty in entering the Kingdom.

(e) It is a good plan, when penitents are not thoroughly broken up and submissive – when they do not recognize their danger sufficiently – to let them pray for themselves aloud. The sound of their voices and the utterance of their own distress will help them.

(f) Pray for them. Put yourself in their places. Try to realize their sin and danger. Confess their sins for them. Look into Hell with their eyes, and then come to Calvary and plunge in the Fountain with them, and take hold of God's word and promises, and believe on their behalf.

(g) Singing is a wonderful help to penitents. Oh, what thousands of people have been sung into liberty with those magical Words: –

And there do I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

Sing it till everything moves and boils over, until all hearts are melted, and the penitent, out of despair, takes hold of the Cross, hopes in God, rests in love, and triumphs in His Salvation.