



CHAPTER 3: The Choice of Work

My DEAR COMRADES,

In my last, I promised to furnish you with a few counsels, which would be likely to assist those who may be seeking "good Work," either for themselves or for those dependent on them. The subject is so serious in its bearings, and has so many important interests connected with it, that I find a great difficulty in dealing with it, to any good purpose, in the limited range of a short Letter. However, I will try.

I have already explained my meaning; but to be fairly understood, I must say again that by good Work, I mean Work that commands the approval of God, and is calculated to be of some service to man.

Now, in seeking such Work as that for his children, or in trying to discover how God wants him to employ himself while he is on the earth, there are certain things the Salvationist will not be likely to do, and certain things that I think he will be likely to do. I will begin by mentioning some of the things he will not be likely to do.

1. In making a choice as to the various methods of labour possible to him, I do not think he will be influenced solely by the question of wages. I am sure he will not, if he understands his principles and is true to them. He would most strongly object to a master standing him up on a block in the market-place and selling him for the sake of his labour to the highest bidder. And to embark in any trade or profession regardless of its character, merely because it will produce the most money, amounts to very much the same thing. Yet, I am afraid, nothing loftier in the way of motive influences many people in the selection of their daily toil.

Instead of asking "How can I spend my time and energies to the best advantage for my Lord, and to the most profit for my fellows?" The question is simply, "In what way can I earn the most money?" We admire Paul when he says, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." If he had said, "I determined not to know anything among you but how to make money, and the



soonest get a big balance to my credit at the Savings Bank," we should have despised him. Do not do anything that looks in this direction, my Comrades; but you certainly will if you go about hiring yourself, influenced by no higher motive than how you can get the most wages.

2. In choosing a Life Work, the Salvationist will not be guided merely by what appears agreeable. He does not live to please himself; and, while it may not only be allowable, but wise and desirable, to follow the natural tendency of the children's minds, or of his own, in the choice of an employment, still the higher motive of usefulness, so often referred to in these Letters, must be supreme. Jesus Christ said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, and follow Me."

That injunction must be binding upon every Soldier of the Cross in so important a matter as the employment of his time, and his powers. What a farce must any other following of Him be!

3. In choosing a Life Work, no good Salvationist will be drawn to forms of useless labour. There are a multitude of employments in the world that cannot be exactly said to be injurious, but which, beyond question, answer no good and useful purpose. They could be dispensed with without anyone being particularly inconvenienced. They neither help man in body, mind, or soul. As you would not like to spend your days in blowing bubbles or beating the air, so, as far as possible, avoid those idle performances that bring little or no advantage to your fellow-men.

4. In choosing a form of employment, the Salvationist will avoid what is injurious to the real interests of mankind, and opposed to the spread of the Kingdom of Heaven. Alas! Alas! the world is full of the works of the Devil – that is, works that have their origin in the heart of the Devil, that are based on devilish principles, sustained by devilish powers, and which ultimately carry those who practise them to the place which the Saviour tells us was prepared for the Devil and his angels.

Now, surely, no Salvationist would like to spend his life in helping, in any form, to support and extend such a dark and misery-making business. To that end he must open his eyes and look about him, and keep clear, of any employment, whatever,



which may present, attractions that his conscience tells him belong to any section of this Satanic School. You had far better go to Heaven with Lazarus from a Poorhouse, than ride in a coach-and-six with the rich man to Hell.

Then, there is another aspect of the trades and callings around us to-day, against which a Salvationist should be on his guard. Many trades are dangerous to health, if not absolutely destructive of life. Now, there are plenty of methods by which you can make a livelihood, without doing so at the price of your health, and therefore, these disease-breeding businesses should, be avoided.

But there is another danger, more serious still, concerning which I must warn you. There are many occupations, in which it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to keep a good, conscience. I need not counsel you to leave these severely alone. Your own conscience will tell you what you ought to do.

But I will suppose that some of my readers find themselves already embarked in one or other of these objectionable methods of labour. What, are they, to do? I think I have already answered that question. If any man or woman is not certain, in their own minds, whether their present occupation is wrong, in the sight of God, or not, let them ask Him to show them; and if it is contrary to His will, to deliver them from it.

But what is a Salvationist to do, who is employed in the homes or about the persons of people whom he knows to be ungodly? As, for instance, what is a carpenter to do who finds himself building a house, or a compositor printing a book, or a housemaid waiting at the table, for individuals openly opposed to the Word and Work of God?

They must remain at their posts and do their duty and thereby seek to win those whom they serve to Christ, unless plainly called by God elsewhere. To get away entirely from the service of wicked people, or from having any connection with their doings, is utterly impossible, circumstanced as we are at present. To do so, we should have to go out of this world altogether.

I remember once hearing a celebrated Doctor say, that a certain wealthy brewer had written him asking his advice concerning a particular malady from which he was



suffering, and which was likely to prove fatal. My friend, who was an ardent Temperance man, said to me that he had no doubt he could help him, and perhaps save his life, but the question with which he was occupied was whether it was his duty to assist in keeping a man alive whose business was so palpably opposed to the best interests of mankind.

Now many servants might reason after this fashion with regard to their masters and mistresses, and even with the members of their own families, but it does not appear to me possible or desirable to act upon such a rule. God does not do so Himself. He allows the wicked to live and to prosper. He sends His rain, and makes His sun to shine with almost equal benefit on the evil and on the good, seeking, no doubt, by the bestowment of these mercies to lead the transgressors to repentance.

A rather remarkable story, I heard a good many years ago may serve as an illustration here.

A gentleman, well-to-do in the world, having a large circle of gay companions, and spending his life in all manner of revelry and vice, had a very pious wife. She was so patient and forbearing with him in his evil-doing that he was in the habit of boasting of it. One night, when engaged in a midnight revel, he offered to wager a dozen bottles of wine that if he went home, late as it was, or rather early in the morning, and rung his wife up, and ordered a supper, that she would rise, call the servants from their beds, and have the meal prepared, the whole being done, not only without reproaches, but with kindness and good humour.

The bet was accepted by one of the gentlemen, and they all repaired to the house. The man did as he had proposed. The lady rose, the supper was prepared, and, with a meek but pleasant countenance, she sat at the head of the table. This so surprised the gentleman who had accepted the wager, that he addressed her somewhat as follows:

"Madam, you surprise me. Your husband has behaved in a most unnatural manner, and we have been ungenerous parties to it. He has roused you at this unreasonable hour, and compelled you to go through what must have been a most unpleasant task, and, although the whole business must have been most repulsive to your feelings, you



have not uttered one word of complaint. Can you explain to us the reason for your forbearance?"

To this appeal the lady replied:

"My husband is pursuing a course which can only have one termination. I have prayed for him, wept over him, and besought him to abandon his evil ways, but all in vain. He appears fully set on finishing his journey, which can only lead him to the world of woe. There, I know, he will have no more gladness. I love him, and have therefore resolved to do what I can to promote his comfort, and furnish him with innocent pleasures, while he is here, seeing that there will be nothing but regrets and misery for him in the next world"

As she said this, she burst into tears, and the gentleman to whom she spoke, was so impressed that he went away, resolved from that hour to forsake his sins and serve the living God.

It certainly is not our duty to punish every evildoer we meet, even if we had the power. But it is our duty to discharge such earthly obligations as are laid upon us with respect to them. The consequences of their conduct must rest with themselves.

But what I am specially insisting upon in this Letter is, that every Salvationist must be responsible for employing himself, as far as he finds it possible to do so, on such Work as he can do with a good conscience – such Work as is worth doing well, and such Work as will be really useful to man and honourable to God.