



The Soul-Winner's Secret

Chapter 12 – Saving Truth

All truth is precious, but not all truth is adapted to secure the immediate conversion and sanctification of men, any more than all medicine is adapted to cure heart-disease or rheumatism.

There are certain truths which, preached in the power of the Holy Ghost, are as much adapted to convert and sanctify souls as food to satisfy hunger, or fire to melt ice; while there are other truths, equally Biblical, that will no more secure such results than will the truths of the multiplication table comfort a brokenhearted mother while mourning for her lost children, or those of astronomy quiet a guilty conscience roused from the slumber of sin.

Some time since I read the amazing and humbling statement that "there were over 3,000 churches in two of the leading denominations of this country that did not report a single member added by profession of faith last year." Well may the writer add, "Think of more than 3,000 ministers in two denominations world-renowned for their schools and culture, preaching a whole year, and aided by deacons and Sabbath-school teachers and Christian parents and church members and prayer meetings and Sabbath schools and Christian Endeavor Societies, and helps and helpers innumerable, and all without one conversion!"

Why this stupendous failure? It cannot be that truth was not preached and taught in the Sunday schools and prayer meetings. These preachers and teachers and parents were orthodox, cultured, and skilled in Biblical lore. No doubt they preached and taught truth from one end of the year to the other, but it was not the truth – the truth that saves, the truth that first smites the conscience, lays bare the secrets of the heart, and arouses the slumbering soul until, self-convicted, it feels that every man it meets is acquainted with its guilt, and every wind and every footfall is an accusing voice, and no cover can hide from God's searching eye, and when conviction has wrought its purpose, and penitence is complete, whispers of forgiveness and peace, and offers mercy and salvation full and free through the bleeding Lamb of God, "before



the world's foundation slain."

Such truth preached faithfully and constantly in these pulpits and churches – not timidly and feebly, like powder and shot buried by a child's hand, but rather with power, like thunderbolts from the cannon's mouth – might have set the nation in a blaze of revival fire.

The fact is there are different kinds or grades of truth for different classes of people, just as there are different medicines for various diseases, and food for different ages and constitutions. Jesus declares this when He says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12.) The soul-winner must recognize this fact, and seek rightly to divide the word of truth. The Christian needs a different kind and application of truth from that needed by the sinner or backslider, and the sanctified man can receive the strong meat of God's Word, while babes in Christ must be fed on milk. (1 Cor. 3:1, 2; Heb. 5:12, 14.)

With the sinner, the principal attack should be made on the conscience and the will; he may be moral, and more or less amiable in his family and social relations, and honorable among his business associates, but be sure that under this is secret selfishness and heart sin. He seeks his own way, is disobedient to the light, careless to the dying love of Jesus, and in reality, if not in profession, he is an enemy to God, and must be convinced of these facts, and faithfully and lovingly and firmly warned of his utter ruin if he does not repent. Repentance, deep, thorough and heartfelt, that leads to a confession and an utter, eternal renunciation of all sin and a complete amendment of life and a making right as far as possible of all past wrong, must be presented as the "strait gate" through which alone he can enter the highway to heaven. We must insist on an immediate and unconditional surrender to all the light God gives, and offer him mercy and tender love through Jesus Christ only if he yields.

The motives that lead to repentance are drawn from eternity, and there is a whole armory of truth with which the sinner can and must be bombarded to bring him to terms, such as the certainty that what he sows he shall reap; that his sins will surely find him out; that death will speedily overtake him; and that if, refusing mercy, he presumes on the goodness of God, and



continues in selfishness and sin, hell shall be his portion forever; while a life of peace and joy here, a happy deathbed, and eternal glory can be offered him as the alternative, on condition of obedient faith.

About the same kind of truth is necessary for the backslider, except that the proportions may have to be varied. If he is stubborn, thunder the law at him until he hoists the white flag and sues for mercy. If he is sorry he has backslidden, but fears it is vain to try again, then he should be encouraged in every possible way to look up and trust, and the infinite love and pity of God revealed in Jesus should be pressed upon his attention, and he should be urged to cast himself upon God's mercy.

If these foundation truths of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are fully, affectionately, and prayerfully presented, and the sinner or backslider grasps and trusts them, he will be converted, accepted by the Lord, and adopted into His family. He must now be fed upon truths different from those he was fed on before. He will have a tender heart, and so it will be most unwise to thunder the law at him, though he should be fully instructed as to the spirituality of the law, and that it is the law by which God wishes us to order our conduct, and for which abundant grace will be given. Nor should he now be asked to surrender since he is saved; but he should be intelligently instructed as to the nature and extent of the consecration that is expected from him, and he should be urged, and wisely and tenderly encouraged to make the consecration, presenting his body a living sacrifice and yielding himself to God, "as those that are alive from the dead."

He should now be instructed as to the fact of inbred sin, which he will soon find stirring within him, and the importance and possibility of having this enemy cast out. Holiness should be presented not so much as a stern demand of a holy God, but rather as his glorious privilege as a child of God. He should be taught that it is an experience in which "perfect love casteth out fear" – a rest of soul, in which, as our bones and sinews are so covered with flesh as to be unperceived, so the fact of duty, while still remaining in force, is yet clothed upon and hidden by



love.

Therefore, while the necessity of holiness should be presented, and a gentle and constant pressure be brought to bear upon the will, yet the principal effort should be made to remove slavish fear by instructing the understanding, and so drawing out the confidence and affections that the soul which in conversion bowed at the feet of Jesus as its Conqueror, will now intelligently and rapturously yield to Him as its Heavenly Bridegroom and fall so desperately in love with Him by the incoming of the Holy Spirit that it shall cry out with David, "I delight to do Thy will, O God!" and with Jesus "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."

If the soul-winner does not keep a clear, warm, tender experience of full salvation himself, there is a danger of driving the people to a legal experience instead of leading them into a "perfect-love" experience. A legal experience is one in which the man braces up to his duty because the law demands it, in which he is prodded and pushed up to it by the terrors of the law rather than led up to it by the sweet wooings and gentle drawings of love.

In a holiness meeting, where there are sinners and backsliders, there will be a strong temptation to address them, and as the kind of truth they need differs from that needed by converts, if this is done, confusion is likely to result and an uncertain experience engendered in the hearts of Christians. It will usually be found wisest to leave the sinners and backsliders alone in this meeting, and go straight for the Christians, to get them sanctified. The Lord has been pleased to give me victory along this line, and usually I find also there are some sinners saved in my holiness meetings.

Jesus likens a Christian to a sheep. Our duty then in the holiness meeting is not to club them with the law, but rather to feed them with the promises and assurances of the Gospel, and to teach them to discern the voice of the good Shepherd and to remove all fear, that they may gladly follow Him.

The staple diet of all saints should be the promises, seasoned with the commandments to give



them a healthy relish.

The promises draw us on in the narrow way, and the commandments hedge us in that we do not lose the way. The promises should be so presented and the fullness there is in the Gospel and in Jesus so be brought to view that the souls of the people will run hard after Him and not need continual beatings to keep them from breaking through the hedge on to the devil's territory.

To discern clearly and apply skillfully the truth needed by the souls we are set to save, requires heavenly wisdom, and well does Paul exhort Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." But our study will be in vain unless we, in lowliness of mind, sit at the feet of Jesus, seek wisdom from God, and submit ourselves in glad, prayerful faith to the Spirit of truth who can and will guide "into all truth." (John 16:13)

The Bible, which contains the revealed truth necessary to salvation, will surely puzzle and mystify all who come to it in the big and swelling conceit of worldly wisdom, but it will open its treasure to the plain and humble men who come to it full of the Spirit that moved holy men of old to write it.

O Lord, evermore give to Thy people leaders and teachers filled with this Spirit, and clothed with this wisdom!