

Historical Reflection

On Conversion As Our Aim

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The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ be faithfully preached, the minister has not laboured in vain, for he is a sweet savour unto God as well in them that perish as in them that are saved. Yet, as a rule, God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ the sons of men may be reconciled to him. Here and there a preacher of righteousness, like Noah, may labour on and bring none beyond his own family circle into the ark of salvation; and another, like Jeremiah, may weep in vain over an impenitent nation; but, for the most part, the work of preaching is intended to save the hearers. It is ours to sow even in stony places, where no fruit rewards our toil; but still we are bound to look for a harvest, and mourn if it does not appear in due time.

The glory of God being our chief object, we aim at it by seeking the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners. It is a noble work to instruct the people of God, and to build them up in their most holy faith: we may by no means neglect this duty. To this end we must give clear statements of gospel doctrine, of vital experience, and of Christian duty, and never shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. In too many cases sublime truths are held in abeyance under the pretence that they are not practical; whereas the very fact that they are revealed proves that the Lord thinks them to be of value, and woe unto us if we pretend to be wiser than he. We may say of any and every doctrine of Scripture –

“To give it then a tongue is wise in man.”

If any one note is dropped from the divine harmony of truth the music may be sadly marred. Your people may fall into grave spiritual diseases through the lack of a certain form of spiritual nutriment, which can only be supplied by the doctrines which you withhold. In the food which we eat there are ingredients which do not at first appear to be necessary to life; but experience shows that they are requisite to health and strength. Phosphorus will not make flesh, but it is wanted for bone; many earths and salts come under the same description – they are necessary in due proportion to the human economy. Even thus certain truths which appear to be little adapted for spiritual nutriment are, nevertheless, very beneficial in furnishing believers with backbone and muscle, and in repairing the varied organs of Christian manhood. We must preach “the whole truth,” that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Our great object of glorifying God is, however, to be mainly achieved by the winning of souls. We *must* see souls born unto God. If we do not, our cry should be that of Rachel “Give me children, or I die.” If we do not win souls, we should mourn as the husbandman who sees no harvest, as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the huntsman who has in vain roamed over hill and dale. Ours should be Isaiah’s language uttered with many a sign and groan—“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The ambassadors of peace should not cease to weep bitterly until sinners weep for their sins.

If we intensely desire to see our hearers believe on the Lord Jesus, how shall we act in order to be used of God for producing such a result? This is the theme of the present lecture.

Since conversion is a divine work, we must take care that we *depend entirely upon the Spirit of God*, and look to him for power over men’s minds. Often as this remark is repeated, I fear we too little feel its force; for if we were more truly sensible of our need of the Spirit of God, should we not study more in dependence upon his teaching? Should we not pray more importunately to be anointed with his sacred

unction? Should we not in preaching give more scope for his operation? Do we not fail in many of our efforts, because we practically, though not doctrinally, ignore the Holy Ghost? His place as God is on the throne, and in all our enterprises he must be first, midst, and end: we are instruments in his hand, and nothing more.

This being fully admitted, what else should be done if we hope to see conversions? *Assuredly we should be careful to preach most prominently those truths which are likely to lead to this end.* What truths are those? I answer, we should first and foremost preach *Christ, and him crucified.* Where Jesus is exalted souls are attracted; - "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The preaching of the cross is to them that are saved the wisdom of God and the power of God. The Christian minister should preach all the truths which cluster around the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and hence he must declare very earnestly and pointedly *the evil of sin*, which created the need of a Saviour. Let him show that sin is a breach of the law, that it necessitates punishment, and that the wrath of God is revealed against it. Let him never treat sin as though it were a trifle, or a misfortune, but let him set it forth as exceeding sinful. Let him get into particulars, not superficially glancing at evil in the gross, but mentioning various sins in detail, especially those most current at the time: such as that all-devouring hydra of drunkenness, which devastates our land; lying, which in the form of slander abounds on all sides; and licentiousness, which must be mentioned with holy delicacy, and yet needs to be denounced unsparingly. We must especially reprove those evils into which our hearers have fallen, or are likely to fall. Explain the ten commandments and obey the divine injunction: "show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Open up the spirituality of the law as our Lord did, and show how it is broken by evil thoughts, intents, and imaginations. By this means many sinners will be pricked in their hearts. Old Robbie Flockhart used to say, "It is of no use trying to sew with the silken thread of the gospel unless we pierce the way for it with the sharp needle of the law." The law goes first, like the needle, and draws the gospel thread after it: therefore preach concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Let such language as that of the fifty-first Psalm be often explained: show that God requireth truth in the inward parts, and that purging with sacrificial blood is absolutely needful. Aim at the heart. Probe the wound and touch the very quick of the soul. Spare not the sterner themes, for men must be wounded before they can be healed, and slain before they can be made alive. No man will ever put on the robe of Christ's righteousness till he is stripped of his fig leaves, nor will he wash in the fount of mercy till he perceives his filthiness. Therefore, my brethren, we must not cease to declare the law, its demands, its threatenings, and the sinner's multiplied breaches of it.

Teach the depravity of human nature. Show men that sin is not an accident, but the genuine outcome of their corrupt hearts. Preach the doctrine of the natural depravity of man. It is an unfashionable truth; for nowadays ministers are to be found who are very fine upon "the dignity of human nature." The "lapsed state of man"—that is the phrase—is sometimes alluded to, but the corruption of our nature, and kindred themes are carefully avoided: Ethiopians are informed that they may whiten their skins, and it is hoped that leopards will remove their spots. Brethren, you will not fall into this delusion, or, if you do, you may expect few conversions. To prophesy smooth things, and to extenuate the evil of our lost estate, is not the way to lead men to Jesus.

Brethren, *the necessity for the Holy Ghost's divine operations* will follow as a matter of course upon the former teaching, for dire necessity demands divine interposition. Men must be told that they are dead, and that only the Holy Spirit can quicken them; that the Spirit works according to his own good pleasure, and that no man can claim his visitations or deserve his aid. This is thought to be very discouraging teaching, and so it is, but men need to be discouraged when they are seeking salvation in a wrong manner. To put them out of conceit of their own abilities is a great help toward bringing them to look out of self to another, even the Lord Jesus. The doctrine of election and other great truths which declare salvation to be all of grace, and to be, not the right of the creature, but the gift of the Sovereign Lord, are all calculated to hide pride from man, and so to prepare him to receive the mercy of God.

We must also set before our hearers the justice of God and *the certainty that every transgression will be punished.* Often must we

"Before them place a dread array,
The pomp of that tremendous day

When Christ with clouds shall come.”

Sound in their ears the doctrine of the second advent, not as a curiosity of prophecy, but as a solemn practical fact. It is idle to set forth our Lord in all the tinkling bravery of an earthly kingdom, after the manner of brethren who believe in a revived Judaism; we need to preach the Lord as coming to judge the world in righteousness, to summon the nations to his bar, and to separate them as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and made Felix tremble: these themes are equally powerful now. We rob the gospel of its power if we leave out its threatenings of punishment. It is to be feared that the novel opinions upon annihilation and restoration which have afflicted the Church in these days have caused many ministers to be slow to speak concerning the last judgment and its issues, and consequently the terrors of the Lord have had small influence upon either preachers or hearers. If this be so it cannot be too much regretted, for one great means of conversion is thus left unused.

Beloved brethren, we must be most of all clear upon the great soul-saving doctrine of *the atonement*; we must preach a real bonafide substitutionary sacrifice, and proclaim pardon as its result. Cloudy views as to atoning blood are mischievous to the last degree; souls are held in unnecessary bondage, and saints are robbed of the clam confidence of faith, because they are not definitely told that “God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” We must preach substitution straightforwardly and unmistakably, for if any doctrine be plainly taught in Scripture it is this, —“This chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” “He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” This truth gives rest to the conscience by showing how God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. This is the great net of gospel fishermen: the fish are drawn or driven in the right direction by other truths, but this is the net itself.

If men are to be saved, we must in plainest terms preach *justification by faith*, as the method by which the atonement becomes effectual in the soul’s experience. If we are saved by the substitutionary work of Christ, no merit of ours is wanted, and all men have to do is by a simple faith to accept what Christ has already done. It is delightful to dwell on the grand truth that “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” O glorious sight—the Christ sitting down in the place of honour because his work is done. Well may the soul rest in a work so evidently complete.

Justification by faith must never be obscured, and yet all are not clear upon it. I once heard a sermon upon “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” of which the English was, “Be good, very good, and though you will have to suffer in consequence, God will reward you in the end.” The preacher, no doubt, believed in justification by faith, but he very distinctly preached the opposite doctrine. Many do this when addressing children, and I notice that they generally speak to the little ones about *loving* Jesus, and not upon believing in him. This must leave a mischievous impression upon youthful minds and take them off from the true way of peace.

Preach earnestly *the love of God in Christ Jesus*, and magnify the abounding mercy of the Lord; but always preach it in connection with his justice. Do not extol the single attribute of love in the method too generally followed, but regard love in the high theological sense, in which, like a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes: for God were not love if he were not just, and did not hate every unholy thing. Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another. Let boundless mercy be seen in calm consistency with stern justice and unlimited sovereignty. The true character of God is fitted to awe, impress, and humble the sinner: be careful not to misrepresent your Lord.

All these truths and others which complete the evangelical system are calculated to lead men to faith; therefore make them the staple of your teaching.

Secondly, if we are intensely anxious to have souls saved we must not only preach the truths which are likely to lead up to this end, but we must *use modes of handling those truths which are likely to conduce thereto*. Do you enquire, what are they? First, you must do a great deal by way of *instruction*. Sinners are not saved *in* darkness but *from* it; “that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.” Men must be taught concerning themselves, their sin, and their fall; their Saviour, redemption, regeneration, and so on. Many

awakened souls would gladly accept God's way of salvation if they did but know it; they are akin to those of whom the apostle said, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." If you will instruct them God will save them: is it not written "the entrance of they word giveth light"? If the Holy Spirit blesses your teaching, they will see how wrong they have been, and they will be led to repentance and faith. I do not believe in that preaching which lies mainly in shouting, "Believe! Believe! Believe!" In common justice you are bound to tell the poor people what they are to believe. There must be instruction, otherwise the exhortation to believe is manifestly ridiculous, and must in practice be abortive. I fear that some of our orthodox brethren have been prejudiced against the free invitations of the gospel by hearing the raw, undigested harangues of revivalist speakers whose heads are loosely put together. The best way to preach sinners to Christ is to preach Christ to sinners. Exhortations, entreaties, and beseechings, if not accompanied with sound instruction, are like firing off powder without shot. You may shout, and weep and plead, but you cannot lead men to believe what they have not heard, nor to receive a truth which has never been set before them. "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge."

While giving instruction it is wise to *appeal to the understanding*. True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional. I am not an admirer of the peculiar views of Mr. Finney, but I have no doubt that he was useful to many; and his power to lay in his use of clear arguments. Many who knew his fame were greatly disappointed at first hearing him, because he used few beauties of speech and was as calm and dry as a book of Euclid; but he was exactly adapted to a certain order of minds, and they were convinced and convicted by his forcible reasoning. Should not persons of an argumentative cast of mind be provided for? We are to be all things to all men, and to these men we must become argumentative and push them into a corner with plain deductions and necessary inferences. Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing the more the better.

The class requiring logical argument is small compared with the number of those who need to be pleaded with, by way of *emotional persuasion*. They require not so much reasoning as heart-argument—which is logic set on fire. You must argue with them as a mother pleads with her boy that he will not grieve her, or as a fond sister entreats a brother to return to their father's home and seek reconciliation: argument must be quickened into persuasion by the living warmth of love. Cold logic has its force, but when made red hot with affection the power of tender argument is inconceivable. The power which one mind can gain over others is enormous, but it is often best developed when the leading mind has ceased to have power over itself. When passionate zeal has carried the man himself away his speech becomes an irresistible torrent, sweeping all before it. A man known to be godly and devout, and felt to be large-hearted and self-sacrificing, has a power in his very person, and his advice and recommendation carry weight because of his character; but when he comes to plead and to persuade, even to tears, his influence is wonderful, and God the Holy Spirit yokes it into his service. Brethren, we must *plead*. Entreaties and beseechings must blend with our instructions. Any and every appeal which will reach the conscience and move men to fly to Jesus we must perpetually employ, if by any means we may save some. I have sometimes heard ministers blamed for speaking of themselves when they are pleading, but the censure need not be much regarded while we have such a precedent as the example of Paul. To a congregation who love you it is quite allowable to mention your grief that many of them are unsaved, and your vehement desire, and incessant prayer for their conversion. You are doing right when you mention your own experience of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, and plead with men to come and taste the same. We must not be abstractions or mere officials to our people, but we must plead with them as real flesh and blood, if we would see them converted. When you can quote yourself as a living instance of what grace has done, the plea is too powerful to be withheld through fear of being charged with egotism.

Sometimes, too, we must change our tone. Instead of instructing, reasoning, and persuading, we must come to *threatening*, and declare the wrath of God upon impenitent souls. We must lift the curtain and let them see the future. Show them their danger, and warn them to escape from the wrath to come. This done, we must return to *invitation*, and set before the awakened mind the rich provisions of infinite grace which are freely presented to the sons of men. In our Master's name we must give the invitation, crying, "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Do not be deterred from this, my brethren, by those ultra-Calvinistic theologians who say, "You may instruct and warn the ungodly, but you must not invite or entreat them." And why not? "Because they are dead sinners, and it is therefore absurd to invite them, since they cannot come." Wherefore then may we warn or instruct them? The argument is so strong, if it

be strong at all, that it sweeps away all modes of appeal to sinners, and they alone are logical who, after they have preached to the saints, sit down and say, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." On what ground are we to address the ungodly at all? If we are only to bid them do such things as they are capable of doing without the Spirit of God, we are reduced to mere moralists. If it be absurd to bid the dead sinner believe and live, it is equally vain to bid him consider his state, and reflect upon his future doom. Indeed, it would be idle altogether were it not that true preaching is an act of faith, and is owned by the Holy Spirit as the means of working spiritual miracles. If we were by ourselves, and did not expect divine interpositions, we should be wise to keep within the bounds of reason, and persuade men to do only what we see in them the ability to do. We should then bid the living live, urge the seeing to see, and persuade the willing to will. The task would be so easy that it might even seem to be superfluous; certainly no special call of the Holy Ghost would be needed for so very simple an undertaking. But, brethren, where is the mighty power and the victory of faith if our ministry is this and nothing more? Who among the sons of men would think it a great vocation to be sent into a synagogue to say to a perfectly vigorous man, "Rise up and walk," or to the possessor of sound limbs, "Stretch out thine hand." He is a poor Ezekiel whose greatest achievement is to cry, "Ye living souls, live."

Let the two methods be set side by side as to practical result, and it will be seen that those who never exhort sinners are seldom winners of souls to any great extent, but they maintain their churches by converts from other systems. I have even heard them say, "Oh, yes, the Methodists and Revivalists are beating the hedges, but we shall catch many of the birds." If I harboured such a mean thought I should be ashamed to express it. A system which cannot touch the outside world, but must leave arousing and converting work to others, whom it judges to be unsound, writes its own condemnation.

Again, brethren, if we wish to see souls saved, we must be wise as to *the times* when we address the unconverted. Very little common sense is spent over this matter. Under certain ministries there is a set time for speaking to sinners, and this comes as regularly as the hour of noon. A few crumbs of the feast are thrown to the dogs under the table at the close of the discourse, and they treat your crumbs as you treat them, namely, with courteous indifference. Why should the warning word be always at the hinder end of the discourse when hearers are most likely to be weary? Why give men notice to buckle on their harness so as to be prepared to repel our attack? When their interest is excited, and they are least upon the defensive, then let fly a shaft at the careless, and it will frequently be more effectual than a whole flight of arrows shot against them at a time when they are thoroughly encased in armour of proof. Surprise is a great element in gaining attention and fixing a remark upon the memory, and times for addressing the careless should be chosen with an eye to that fact. It may be very well as a rule to seek the edification of the saints in the morning discourse, but it would be wise to vary it, and let the unconverted sometimes have the chief labour of your preparation and the best service of the day.

Do not close a single sermon without addressing the ungodly, but at the same time set yourself seasons for a determined and continuous assault upon them, and proceed with all your soul to the conflict. On such occasions aim distinctly at immediate conversions; labour to remove prejudices, to resolve doubts, to conquer objections, and to drive the sinner out of his hiding-places at once. Summon the church-members to special prayer, beseech them to speak personally both with the concerned and the unconcerned, and be yourself doubly upon the watch to address individuals. We have found that our February meetings at the Tabernacle have yielded remarkable results: the whole month being dedicated to special effort. Winter is usually the preacher's harvest, because the people can come together better in the long evenings, and are debarred from out-of-door exercises and amusements. Be well prepared for the appropriate season when "kings go forth to battle."

Among the important elements in the promotion of conversion are your own tone, temper, and spirit in preaching. If you preach the truth in a dull, monotonous style, God may bless it, but in all probability he will not; at any rate the tendency of such a style is not to promote attention, but to hinder it. It is not often that sinners are awakened by ministers who are themselves asleep. A hard, unfeeling mode of speech is also to be avoided; want of tenderness is a sad lack, and repels rather than attracts. The spirit of Elijah may startle, and where it is exceedingly intense it may go far to prepare for the reception of the gospel; but for actual conversion more of John is needed,—love is the winning force. We must love men to Jesus.

Great hearts are the main qualifications for great preachers, and we must cultivate our affections to that end. At the same time our manner must not degenerate into the soft and saccharine cant which some men affect who are for ever *dearing* everybody, and fawning upon people as if they hoped to soft-sawder them into godliness. Manly persons are disgusted, and suspect hypocrisy when they hear a preacher talking molasses. Let us be bold and outspoken, and never address our hearers as if we were asking a favour of them, or as if they would oblige the Redeemer by allowing him to save them. We are bound to be lowly, but our office as ambassadors should prevent our being servile.

Happy shall we be if we preach believingly, always expecting the Lord to bless his own word. This will give us a quiet confidence which will forbid petulance, rashness, and weariness. If we ourselves doubt the power of the gospel, how can we preach it with authority? Feel that you are a favoured man in being allowed to proclaim the good news, and rejoice that your mission is fraught with eternal benefit to those before you. Let the people see how glad and confident the gospel has made you, and it will go far to make them long to partake in its blessed influences.

Preach very solemnly, for it is a weighty business, but let your matter be lively and pleasing, for this will prevent solemnity from souring into dreariness. Be so thoroughly solemn that all your faculties are aroused and consecrated, and then a dash of humour will only add intenser gravity to the discourse, even as a flash of lightning makes midnight darkness all the more impressive. Preach to one point, concentrating all your energies upon the object aimed at. There must be no riding of hobbies, no introduction of elegancies of speech, no suspicion of personal display, or you will fail. Sinners are quick-witted people, and soon detect even the smallest effort to glorify self. Forego everything for the sake of those you long to save. Be a fool for Christ's sake if this will win them, or be a scholar, if that will be more likely to impress them. Spare neither labour in the study, prayer in the closet, nor zeal in the pulpit. If men do not judge their souls to be worth a thought, compel them to see that their minister is of a very different opinion.

Mean conversions, expect them, and prepare for them. Resolve that your hearers shall either yield to your Lord or be without excuse, and that this shall be the immediate result of the sermon now in hand. Do not let the Christians around you wonder when souls are saved, but urge them to believe in the undiminished power of the glad tidings, and teach them to marvel if no saving result follows the delivery of the testimony of Jesus. Do not permit sinners to hear sermons as a matter of course, or allow them to play with the edged tools of Scripture as if they were mere toys; but again and again remind them that every true gospel sermon leaves them worse if it does not make them better. Their unbelief is a daily, hourly sin; never let them infer from your teaching that they are to be pitied for continuing to make God a liar by rejecting his Son.

Impressed with a sense of their danger, give the ungodly no rest in their sins; knock again and again at the door of their hearts, and knock as for life and death. Your solicitude, your earnestness, your anxiety, your travailing in birth for them God will bless to their arousing. God works mightily by this instrumentality. But our agony for souls must be real and not feigned, and therefore our hearts must be wrought into true sympathy with God. Low piety means little spiritual power. Extremely pointed addresses may be delivered by men whose hearts are out of order with the Lord, but their result must be small. There is a something in the very tone of the man who has been with Jesus which has more power to touch the heart than the most perfect oratory: remember this and maintain an unbroken walk with God. You will need much night-work in secret if you are to gather many of your Lord's lost sheep. Only by prayer and fasting can you gain power to cast out the worst of devils. Let men say what they will about sovereignty, God connects special success with special states of heart, and if these are lacking he will not do many mighty works.

In addition to earnest preaching it will be wise to use other means. If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to enquirers. A meeting after every service may not be desirable, but frequent opportunities for coming into direct contact with your people should be sought after, and by some means created. It is shocking to think that there are ministers who have to method whatever for meeting the anxious, and if they do see here and there one, it is because of the courage of the seeker, and not because of the earnestness of the pastor. From the very first you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should continually invite such to come and

speak with you. In addition to this, hold numerous enquirers' meetings, at which the addresses shall be all intended to assist the troubled and guide the perplexed, and with these intermingle fervent prayers for the individuals present, and short testimonies from recent converts and others. As an open confession of Christ is continually mentioned in connection with saving faith, it is your wisdom to make it easy for believers who are as yet following Jesus by night to come forward and avow their allegiance to him. There must be no persuading to make a profession, but there should be every opportunity for so doing, and no stumbling-block placed in the way of hopeful minds. As for those who are not so far advanced as to warrant any thought of baptism, you may be of the utmost benefit to them by personal intercourse, and therefore you should seek it. Doubts may be cleared away, errors rectified, and terrors dispelled by a few moments' conversation; I have known instances in which a life-long misery has been ended by a simple explanation which might have been given years before. Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, and when you find all your thoughts needed for a single individual, do not grudge your labour, for your Lord in his parable represents the good shepherd as bringing home his lost sheep, not in a flock, but one at a time upon his shoulders, and rejoicing so to do.

With all that you can do your desires will not be fulfilled, for soul-winning is a pursuit which grows upon a man; the more he is rewarded with conversions the more eager he becomes to see greater numbers born unto God. Hence you will soon discover that *you need help if many are to be brought in*. The net soon becomes too heavy for one pair of hands to drag to shore when it is filled with fishes; and your fellow-helpers must be beckoned to your assistance. Great things are done by the Holy Spirit when a whole church is aroused to sacred energy: then there are hundreds of testimonies instead of one, and these strengthen each other; then advocates for Christ succeed each other and work into each other's hands, while supplication ascends to heaven with the force of united importunity; thus sinners are encompassed with a cordon of earnest entreaties, and heaven itself is called into the field. It would seem hard in some congregations for a sinner to be saved, for whatever good he may receive from the pulpit is frozen out of him by the arctic atmosphere with which he is surrounded: and on the other hand some churches make it hard for men to remain unconverted, for with holy zeal they persecute the careless into anxiety. It should be our ambition, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to work the entire church into a fine missionary condition, to make it like a Leyden jar charged to the full with divine electricity, so that whatever comes into contact with it shall feel its power. What can one man do alone? What can he not do with an army of enthusiasts around him? Contemplate at the outset the possibility of having a church of soul-winners. Do not succumb to the usual idea that we can only gather a few useful workers, and that the rest of the community must inevitably be a dead weight: it may possibly so happen, but do not set out with that notion or it will be verified. The usual need not be the universal; better things are possible than anything yet attained; set your aim high and spare no effort to reach it. Labour to gather a church alive for Jesus, every member energetic to the full, and the whole in incessant activity for the salvation of men. To this end there must be the best of preaching to feed the host into strength, continual prayer to bring down the power from on high, and the most heroic example of your own part to fire their zeal: then under the divine blessing a common-sense management of the entire force cannot fail to produce the most desirable issues. Who among you can grasp this idea and embody it in actual fact?

To call in another brother every now and then to take the lead in evangelistic services will be found very wise and useful; for there are some fish that never will be taken in your net, but will surely fall to the lot of another fisherman. Fresh voices penetrate where the accustomed sound has lost effect, and they tend also to beget a deeper interest in those already attentive. Sound and prudent evangelists may lend help even to the most efficient pastor, and gather in fruit which he has failed to reach; at any rate it makes a break in the continuity of ordinary services, and renders them less likely to become monotonous. Never suffer jealousy to hinder you in this. Suppose another lamp should outshine yours, what will it matter so long as it brings light to those whose welfare you are seeking? Say with Moses, "Would God all the Lord's servants were prophets." He who is free from selfish jealousy will find that no occasion will suggest it; his people may be well aware that their pastor is excelled by others in talent, but they will be ready to assert that he is surpassed by none in love to their souls. It is not needful for a loving son to believe that his father is the most learned man in the parish; he loves him for his own sake, and not because he is superior to others. Call in every now and then a warm-hearted neighbour, utilize the talent in the church itself, and procure the services of some eminent soul-winner, and this may, in God's hands, break up the hard soil for you, and bring you brighter days.

In fine, beloved brethren, by any means, by all means, labour to glorify God by conversions, and rest not till your heart's desire is fulfilled.