

HIS TOUCH HAS STILL ITS ANCIENT POWER

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT -

WISDOM IN WITNESSING

"I being in the way, the Lord led me" (Genesis 24:27)

THIS witnessing is all very fine for some people, but as soon as I start to speak about the things that matter I stammer and stutter, and get all hot round the collar, and usually end up by wishing I had not opened my mouth at all."

Yes. I fully sympathize with those who do not find it easy to bear witness to CHRIST, but has it ever occurred to you that your very embarrassment may be used to carry conviction? Speak in an easy matter-of-fact way and folk will go away saying:

"Oh, he's got the gift of the gab."

But speak in the manner that our friend has described above, and people will leave you saying:

"I may not believe all he says, but he does, and it must mean a lot to him because it cost him so much to say it."

When I first set out on this adventure of catching men alive, I remember receiving much inspiration from an address by W. G. Ovens on the subject. He said: "Do you feel nervous when you witness for CHRIST, seeking to bring another soul to Him? Well, comfort yourself with this thought, that the person to whom you are speaking is at least twice as nervous as you are!"

In personal work, as in every kind of Christian service, the thing to aim at is simplicity coupled with downright sincerity. That great soul-winner, D. L. Moody, once stayed in the same hotel as a well-known atheist. One day the atheist found his wife in tears. "That man Moody has been talking to me," she sobbed. "Nonsense," said her husband: "why didn't you tell him to mind his own business?" "Because," she replied, "he spoke as if it were his business."

The fact that JESUS so often condemns hypocrisy is a sure proof of His love for sincerity. Yes, and that's what this weary old world is longing for - ordinary men and women like ourselves, who will, with love and sincerity, speak of Him who means so much to us.

The fourth Gospel tells of a sinful woman, who simply by telling others of what she herself had discovered about CHRIST, won many of her fellow-citizens for her new-found SAVIOUR.

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

What a tremendous blessing followed such a simple testimony!

"Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him . . . And many... believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified . . . And many more believed . . . And said unto the woman, Now we believe... and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4).

Harry is a working man, by no means a scholar, but some time ago he made the discovery that CHRIST can both forgive and break the power of cancelled sin; in his case it spelt freedom from the power of drink. His family, chums, and workmates witnessed a mighty transformation.

As they sat at lunch one day one of his workmates said: "Well, I don't believe CHRIST worked all these miracles that the Bible tells us about!" "No," added another, "I don't believe He could turn water into wine; do you, Harry?" "I certainly do." "But you can't prove it, can you?" said the first. "I'm afraid I can't," said Harry. "Then why do you believe such nonsense?" "I believe," said Harry slowly, "I believe that JESUS could turn water into wine, because in our house He has turned beer into furniture."

If GOD could so bless the testimony of an immoral Samaritan woman and a simple British workman, will He not also bless ours? Enough! Begone thou dumb devil! From henceforth I will speak for my Lord!

The MASTER Himself, although a mighty public teacher, was constantly dealing with men individually. He called the twelve Apostles one by one; went out of His way to speak with one woman at Sychar's well; and sat up late into the night to explain to one man the mysteries of the new birth.

It is a fascinating study to watch, through the four Gospels, the MASTER Soul-winner at work. In nearly every case He starts by finding a point of contact.

- Are they interested in bread? Then He starts just there: **"I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger."**

- Are they interested in water? Then: **"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."**

- Or is it fishing? Then: **"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

Until we find a point of contact to win a man's confidence, it is difficult - often unwise - to speak directly about spiritual things. Particularly is this so when dealing with a comparative stranger. On many occasions I have known GOD overrule circumstances and events for the making of the necessary contact.

Some years ago, as a result of the Hatry crash on the Stock Exchange, many people lost all their worldly possessions. A delightful Christian family of my acquaintance was among the unfortunate sufferers. It was a terrible blow to them to have to sell their beautiful home and move into humbler surroundings.

On the morning of the sale, I met the mother of the family. I expressed my sympathy, and made her promise that she would let me know if there was anything I could do to help.

That day was a Thursday, and in the evening I returned from the office (it was in the days when I was a cog of commerce), hoping to have a quiet evening's prayer and preparation for some anniversary services I had promised to conduct that weekend in the Channel Island of Guernsey. At home there was a message awaiting me from Mrs. S., asking me to call and see her. I went round to the house, and on arrival she told me that friends had come from near and far to the auction sale that afternoon, and had paid generously for the furniture and household goods.

"Amongst them was the Honourable Mrs. Winscombe, of Winscombe Hall," she told me. "She bought this carpet, and I wonder if you would mind taking it round to the Hall in your car. I promised to send it."

I had not been converted very long, but I had already discovered the promise in Romans 8:28, "**All things work together for good to them that love God.**" I was not a very experienced preacher, and to conduct anniversary services required diligent preparation on my part, but if the Lord intended me to employ my time in some other work, I believed He would make up the deficiency in preparation.

This was not my first visit to Winscombe Hall, for I had been in the grounds on previous occasions for garden fetes and other functions, but although I had heard a great deal about the Hon. Mrs. Winscombe, I had never met her.

I felt myself swelling with pride as I drove to the stately mansion, through a beautiful avenue of trees, when I was suddenly humbled by a horrid notice bearing the words, "TRADESMEN'S ENTRANCE." I swung the car modestly round to the back door. The butler opened the door to me. I told him that I had brought a carpet for the honourable lady.

In a haughty tone he said, "Kindly wait there." I waited. A few minutes later I heard a footstep, and who should be standing in front of me at the back door but the lady herself, in full evening dress. "Ah, the man with the carpet." I can hear her voice now, "Kindly bring it in heah!" I followed her with the enormous carpet on my shoulder, as she led the way through the servants' hall, where the entire staff were having dinner. I could feel the eyes of the footman, the butler, the cook, the housekeeper, the housemaids, and the kitchenmaids all turned in amusement on "the man with the carpet."

I hoped I should have been able to have a glimpse of some of the beautiful paintings in the main hall, but even this was denied me. I followed the honourable lady up a back staircase to an attic. She switched on the light, and holding her head high said, "Put it down the-ah." I put it down "the-ah" and turned, half hoping to receive a handsome tip, but was only awarded a very formal "Good night."

I wondered what good purpose would be served by this incident which had apparently wasted my evening. I had not long to wait.

I left the office early the following evening to catch the boat train from Waterloo Station. Before

I joined the train I made my way to a busy restaurant near to the junction of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road. I had just settled myself at a table when, glancing up, I saw a young Chinese student, wondering where to sit, and looking very ill at ease. I beckoned him to an empty seat at my table, and helped him to choose his meal from the menu.

I then lifted my heart in prayer that the HOLY SPIRIT would give me an opportunity of witnessing for CHRIST. But my difficulty was to find the point of contact.

The Chinese student could speak very little English, although he could understand all I said to him. He seemed to look upon my attempts at conversation with grave suspicion.

"Have you been long in this country?" I asked.

"Only a month or so."

"What are you doing here?"

"I am studying at the London School of Economics."

"I have one or two friends there. Do you know Jack Ellis or Billy Morgan?"

"I have never heard of them." Another *cul de sac*. I prayed again for the Spirit's leading, and tried another tack.

"Have you been out into the country at all?"

"Yes, I have been to Hertfordshire."

"Why, I have lived in Hertfordshire for many years," I said.

"What part have you visited?"

"I was at Exton."

"Exton?" I said (we were getting warmer now). "That's where I live." He grew more expansive.

"I have been there once or twice to play tennis with other overseas students. We went to the beautiful house of the Honourable Mrs. Winscombe. You do not know her, I suppose?"

"I was at Winscombe Hall, speaking to her only last night," I said heartily.

It was done! The contact was made! The gulf was bridged.

Had you come into that restaurant then and had seen us talking together, you would have thought that we had known each other for years. He trusted me completely now. I glanced at my watch, and saw that I had only a little time left, and still I had not spoken of spiritual things. I did not know whether he was a Confucian or a Buddhist, so I had no inkling how best to approach him, but our mutual contact with the Honourable Mrs. Winscombe had given him such confidence in

me that I felt I could go direct to the heart of the matter.

"I wonder if you would mind my asking a very personal question?"

"Not at all," he replied, "what is it?"

"Tell me, what are you trusting in for your eternal salvation?"

He replied in broken English, "I am a Chinese Roman Catholic, and I do believe to be good and kind, and to do to others as I would like them to do to me. And I believe that eventually through this I shall go to Heaven."

"If we can get to Heaven by doing good, tell me, why did the Lord JESUS die on the Cross?" I could see from the expression on his face that this arrow had gone home. His reply was all I hoped for. "He died to save us." "If He died to save us, why are you trying to save yourself?" He looked thoughtful for a moment, then said, "I have never thought of it like that before . . . He died to save us . . ."

As we sat over our coffee, I explained how good works are the effect, not the cause, of our salvation.

It was thrilling to see the reflection of the dawning light in the expression of his face. I left him my name and address, and hurried off to catch my train.

Some weeks afterwards I received a delightful letter from my Chinese friend. "Dear friend," it ran, "I want to thank you first of all for the talk we had in the busy restaurant in London.

You will be pleased to hear that as a result of that talk I am placing my whole trust in the Lord JESUS to bring me to His Eternal Home."

~ end of chapter 8 ~
