

A QUEST FOR SOULS

Comprising all the Sermons Preached and Prayers
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SIXTEEN -

A CONQUERING FAITH

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

That is a very suggestive sentence in the Bible, which says: "**I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.**" That same word is the word, I trust, that is being daily passed on by the Christian men and women before me, to others about them, Christians and non-Christians. Very thoughtfully, and as we can find the opportunity, the invitation needs to be passed to those about us: "Come with us."

It should be a fixed habit in every Christian life to find out people who do not go to church, and thoughtfully and earnestly ask them to go to church. "**Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.**" "**How shall they hear without a preacher?**" "**It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.**" There can be no substitutes for preaching. Daily, one of the reigning habits in every Christian life should be to ask people about them to come with them to hear the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of GOD.

But we should do more than that.

That is consistent and blessed and important, but that is not enough. We should, in the right way, ask the people about us,

- if it is well with their souls,
- if their sins have been forgiven of GOD,
- if they have been saved,
- if they have been born again,
- if their hearts know what it is to rejoice consciously in JESUS as their personal Saviour.

That kind of conversation ought to be had by Christian people, men and women, day in and out, even with every opportunity.

There is a right way to talk with people about their souls.

Such talk means humility and carefulness and prayerfulness and a deferential consideration for the one with whom you are talking. How JESUS respected personality and honored it, when He stood before it, divine as He was, making His calls and claims to be allowed to be Saviour and Master!

You will bring with you a group to-night to the big tent, won't you, who ought to be brought to the meeting? And if it cannot be a group, cannot each of you Christians bring one person that you ought to bring? And all along won't you be in prayer that the preacher may speak just what he ought to speak, and in that temper in which CHRIST's Gospel ought always to be spoken?

And, more, won't you be in prayer unceasing that the good spirit Divine will open the heart of the one you bring to attend to the word that may be heard? GOD lead you and help you, as you give yourselves to the divinest quest of all - the winning of the lost to Him!

A CONQUERING FAITH.

Text: Luke 5: 16.27.

I should like this morning to direct your attention to a very suggestive incident about this first matter of all - the winning of souls to CHRIST. Will you not give reverent heed to it as I shall read it? I read you from the fifth chapter of Luke's Gospel:

"And He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Jesus. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven Thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but GOD alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven Thee: or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (He said unto the sick of the palsy)! I say unto Thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And Immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day."

The whole incident is taken for our brief study this morning.

We have in this incident, first of all, a picture of JESUS in prayer. Before He went to do any great work He gave himself always to a season of prayer; and after He had wrought a work and

had withdrawn from the publicity of it, He betook himself again to the quiet place to pray. Oh, the Master example for us in prayer is CHRIST JESUS, our Saviour and Lord! The locust that eats up our power as Christians full many a time is the locust of neglected prayer.

If the Master had need to pray, how much more the need for His disciples! And we have in the record of the incident an expression quite striking: "**The power of the Lord was present to heal them.**" JESUS was in a certain building teaching, and it was thronged to its utmost capacity, and there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea and Jerusalem. The striking expression you will note again: "**And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**" It does not say that the power of the Lord did heal them. It says: "**The power of the Lord was present to heal them.**" They did not wish to be healed. As a matter of fact, those Pharisees and doctors of the law, sitting around, were there to cavil, to criticise, to carp, to complain, to deride; were there to find fault. And yet GOD was there in His power to grant healing and forgiveness and grace, if only their attitude to Him had been of the right sort.

Oh, it is a solemn thought, my friends, that when we gather for worship anywhere, in the name of CHRIST, the power of the Lord is right there to heal the people. If only such case shall assume the right attitude to GOD, then shall healing surely come.

- How it ought to touch our hearts!
- How it ought to solemnize them!
- How it ought to humble us!
- How it ought to move us to prayer, that every time we meet and offer any prayer, GOD is there to heal and will heal, if only the right attitude shall be assumed by the hearer toward Him!

Here we have the arresting incident, that four people combined to bring one person to CHRIST, for CHRIST's mercy and help, and the whole occasion is rich in lessons. Two or three will suffice for us this mid-day meeting.

The first is that some cases require extra effort to get them to CHRIST.

There are some cases in this fair city that will never be won to CHRIST unless extra effort is put forth to win them. The ordinary effort will not reach them. The passing, commonplace effort of one person will not reach such cases. There are cases here and there and yonder that require extra effort, if they shall ever be won to CHRIST, and this incident points this pungent lesson and we need earnestly to study that lesson to-day.

Now, to be sure, many cases - I think, most cases - are brought to CHRIST by individual, personal effort. One person goes out after another and brings that other to CHRIST. Andrew went after his brother Simon, much stronger than Andrew, self-willed and impulsive and strengthful; and yet modest Andrew brought his strong and aggressive brother to the Messiah. Time and again is the lesson written large for us, in human experience, that one person may go out and bring another person to CHRIST. Some of us in our pastorates see that truth illustrated week by week.

I am thinking this moment of a timid mother, who came to my study, with her little eleven-year-

old girl, just a few weeks ago, to say to me, in modest but earnest sentences: "I have brought my little girl to talk with you about coming into the church next Sunday morning."

And then I turned to the child, and sought as tactfully as I could, to elicit from her what she knew about JESUS, and she told me her straightforward story.

Her mother, the Saturday night before, had taken her aside, and with careful, prayerful words had explained to the little daughter what being saved meant, and how a sinner is saved alone by CHRIST, and the little girl said: "Mother, I will take Him right now for my Saviour," and her decision was given, and with her eyes moist with tears the beautiful child, looking at her mother, said: "Mother won me to CHRIST Saturday night. When they were all away from home except mother and me, mother brought me to CHRIST."

Oh, I imagine that a legion of angels watched around that home, as the mother did the sublimest thing possible for a mother to do, when she pointed her child in the way of life. And the company of angels, I doubt not, hurried back to the starry heights above, to tell the hosts up there: "The kingdom is coming, because we saw and heard a mother teaching her child the way of life."

On another morning, just before I went into my pulpit to preach at the eleven o'clock hour, there was a knock on my church study door, and I opened it, and there stood a faithful Sunday school teacher, and she had two of her boys, each about twelve or thirteen years of age, and she said: "Pastor, I should like for you to talk with these two boys. They think they would like to join the church this morning, and I should like for you to question them, to see if they are ready for that great step."

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And then I questioned them, and they were soon earnestly telling me, in answer to my questions, how this Sunday school teacher had hunted them out, and had talked with them personally and alone during the past week, and how she had so explained the necessity and the happiness and usefulness of being a Christian, that they could not say no, and had said yes to JESUS.

They knew that He was the Saviour, and not somebody else, and not something else, and they were trusting alone in Him. Their way was clear, their confession beautiful, their knowledge of JESUS evident, and they came into the church that day. How glorious that a Sunday school teacher understands: "I am a shepherd of souls, and I must watch as one who must give account, and I cannot, must not, dare not, ignore the highest claims of these in my class, namely, their spiritual needs."

And then sometimes a friend goes out and wins his friend to CHRIST. Oh, what proof of friendship is comparable to that, where one person goes to another, and in humble, careful, winsome, prayerful words, seeks to win that other to CHRIST, and succeeds! What finer proof of friendship than that!

And how glorious when the Christian wife seeks ways, with all humility and diligence and prayerfulness, to win her unbelieving husband to CHRIST! One of those unbelieving husbands, who held out long and late against JESUS, said to me recently, when he came to talk to me about coming into the church: "Oh, sir, the tears, the very tears of my Christian wife haunted me, as she would say just a little to me about how she yearned for me to be a Christian, about how she prayed for me. She said just a little, but her very tears haunted me."

Most people, I take it, are brought to CHRIST by one person. But there are cases that require more than one. There are cases that require extra effort. There are cases that require combination, consolidation, co-operation, even of the noblest sort.

Our Bible study to-day presents such a case.

Here was a paralyzed man. He could not get to JESUS at all. He was unable to betake himself there. One man could not get him there. It was a task too difficult for two men, and so it came about that four men combined to carry that man, on his bed, sick man, bed and all, into the house where JESUS was teaching, that the great and gracious Healer, as well as Teacher and Lord, might cure this man.

When they came to the house where JESUS was teaching, it was so thronged that they could not get in. Oh, the pathos of the whole scene! The house was crowded with people, who did not care to heed the CHRIST themselves - who carped and caviled and criticized, if haply they might find fault with something JESUS should say or do. *They were not willing to go into the kingdom themselves, and worse than that, they crowded the doorway and blocked the entrance, so that others, who did wish to reach the Master: should be kept out. So these four came and could not enter.*

No place was allowed them to enter. But, not to be deterred, they took that man, bed and all, to the housetop and removed the tiling, and let him down through the roof, bed, sick man and all, right at the feet of JESUS. And when JESUS saw their faith, He said unto the sick man: "**Thy sins are forgiven Thee.**" He did the first thing first. He put forth His power for the cure of his soul first, and then the cure of the body came afterward, and we are never to lose sight of this divine order. The supreme thing is for men's sins to be forgiven. The supreme thing is that men's souls may be made right in the sight of GOD. JESUS first of all cured this man's sick soul, and then later cured his body.

Will you think earnestly on this record of how this man was brought to JESUS?

Four men combined to bring him, and, I repeat, there are cases about us that will never be brought to JESUS, except by combined and extraordinary effort. And we need to see them and find them and combine to help them. These four were necessary to get this dreadfully difficult case to CHRIST. It was a task too much for one, too much for two. It was a task requiring the four, and such cases are about us, and this morning I am seeking to give emphasis to the doctrine that such cases, though difficult and pre-occupied, and far away from GOD's favor and forgiveness, ought to have our most conscientious, most co-operative, most capable attention.

There is not the case of a single man or woman in Fort Worth, no matter how pre-occupied, or absorbed, or old, or wicked, or sinful, no matter what the case, or who the case may be:- there is not one that GOD's people ought to pass by, arguing: "Their cases are too hard, too difficult, too hopeless." There is not one such case.

One morning I preached in another city,. and said: "I wish you would do the unusual thing to win souls; I wish you would do the extraordinary thing. I wish you would go to cases maybe that nobody has spoken to about JESUS for a whole generation." And four men tarried behind and said: "The most difficult case in this community is a half-paralyzed man. With extreme effort, he drags along, with his crutches and a man supporting him, and he is the most blasphemous sinner in all this city."

I said: "Gentlemen, I would have you go after him. You bring him to the outskirts of this meeting, and put him in a comfortable chair, and GOD help me, I will do my best to help him."

And so they went, four of them, and at first he mocked them. He derided them. He laughed at them. He jeered at them. He swore at them. And then at last he listened a little more seriously, and then he pleaded his inability, he pleaded his pitiful impotency, and then at last, the men said: "We will come and carry you. We love you that much. We will put you on the outskirts of the congregation so you shall not have anybody to run over you or to take advantage of you."

And so they brought him, and they whispered to me that he was there, and told me where he sat, and I observed him in a moment, and that day I preached to one man - impotent, paralyzed, broken and helpless - about the wonderful mercy of GOD, to make a man over, to transform him, to reconstruct him, to redeem him, to recover him, to forgive him, to fit him to live, to fit him to die, to fit him for earth, to fit him for Heaven. JESUS does all that, if only a man will come to Him in the right way.

And then I said: "Is there some man here, all broken and beaten and defeated, who would like to be right with GOD. Maybe he has waited long. Maybe the sun of his life is far in the afternoon. Maybe the sun is now sinking low toward the western hills. Now, if such man is here and he wants to be right with GOD, GOD waits to be gracious to him. Does he wish to be right with GOD? Will he lift up his hand and let me see? "

And the first hand to go up was the hand of the half-paralyzed man. Then I dismissed the people a few minutes later, and sought him out, and before the men carried him away, the man had humbly made his surrender to CHRIST. Oh, it was well, for the days were just a few until the second stroke came and carried him into eternity. The extraordinary thing ought to be done for such people, all about us, and done speedily and unceasingly.

I am thinking now of a noble lawyer in Waco. I shall mention his name. If he were living, he would not object. He is now in GOD's house above. His family, I doubt not, would not object to such mention of his name. This noble lawyer and outstanding citizen was Judge Waller Baker. These lawyers present all knew him. Some years ago, when a preacher preached in Waco, he said to his audience: "Oh, men, do not go on in the ordinary, commonplace way, in the winning of souls. Go after a case difficult. Go after a case long neglecting, pre-occupied, too busy to come to GOD; go after him, and if you do not do the extraordinary thing, and put forth the unusual effort, you will not even arrest his attention. Go after him." And when the sermon was done, another lawyer in the audience, himself a distinguished jurist and Christian citizen, gathered some men around him and said: "If three of you men will join me, we will go after this great lawyer."

They combined, the four of them, and they went that afternoon. The lawyer was preparing a difficult case, and he had left word with his stenographer, in the outer room: "Do not admit anybody to my inner room at all. I must not be disturbed. A serious case is on me now." But the stenographer had left the room a minute before they came, and she was not there to forbid their going in, and into the room they went, and then they knocked on that inner door, and it opened, and there was the lawyer, with his coat off, deep in the preparation of that serious case, and he said: "How did you men get past my stenographer?"

They said: "We did not see any stenographer." And so they were in the office, and the door was shut, and he said to them: "Gentlemen, there must be something very serious that can bring you four men here."

The great Christian lawyer made answer: "There is, Mr. Baker; the most serious matter in the world, and I will speak first, and I want first of all to ask you to forgive me, that I have been such a poor Christian, that I have not talked with you more earnestly about CHRIST and His supreme claims, and your need of Him. But we have come, we four men, to ask if you won't cease all your procrastination, and if you won't, for your own sake, and for Waco's sake, and for the world's sake, and for CHRIST's sake, to-day yield yourself to CHRIST."

And then the second man made his plea, and the third man said his say, and the fourth man made his appeal, and then the first man said: "If you won't mind, let us kneel down and all of us be little children, and we will ask GOD to help you to burn all the bridges, give up indecision and delay, and do the extraordinary thing - yield yourself right now to CHRIST."

And down they went on their knees, and all four of them prayed, each for a moment, and when they rose up Mr. Baker said: "Gentlemen, I cannot, will not, hold out against this. I do surrender to CHRIST. May GOD forgive me that I did not do it long ago. I do surrender to CHRIST. Oh, it is so unselfish for you four men, my friends, my neighbors, to come after me like this! I do surrender to CHRIST, now and forever."

Wasn't it glorious? Now, just a little while after that, I was in Los Angeles, speaking there in the Temple Auditorium, and one morning, when I had finished my sermon, I saw before me a sympathetic face in the press of people, and when I had said the benediction at the close, quickly he came to me. It was the same Waller Baker, out there on the Pacific coast, getting some needed rest, and he said: "They have told you about what I did?"

I said: "Oh, I know all about it, Mr. Baker. Thank God!"

He said: "At last I am on the right road-at last!"

He went on to San Francisco, perhaps that night, or a day or two later, and I returned to my Texas home, and before I reached my home, when I reached El Paso, the daily papers had chronicled the news that the evening before, as Mr. Baker was leisurely walking down the streets of San Francisco, he sank down from heart failure, and a few moments later was dead.

When I read it, this was my first thought: What if four men had not gone to him as they did, a few weeks before, to win him to CHRIST? Oh, I am pleading that you, citizens and neighbors and friends, shall, in the right spirit, link yourselves, with GOD to guide you, and empower you, and go after these long neglected cases.

Pass not one of them by.

- Some of them are rich, but their money won't suffice their souls.
- Some of them are having a feverish time in the world social, but society will not ease the ache of a sinful, suffering heart.

- Some of them are in office, are pre-occupied, and every minute is crowded as they clutch after the prizes that lure them on, but these prizes, each and all, cannot ease the hurt of the sinning soul.

I am summoning you this morning to do both the difficult and consistent thing - to go after such cases all about you. And now as you bethink yourselves, case after case will stand before you. I am beseeching you that you will combine with the other man, and you twain shall plead that promise of JESUS: **"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they' shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."**

If you need two, let there be two to go, all unadvertised, but in the quietness and patience of CHRIST. Oh, how the grotesque, and the absurd, and the spectacular in religion cheapens and harms! Our Master's cause does not need any of that. In the beautiful spirit of humility, with quietness, without ostentation, without parade, but patiently, prayerfully and faithfully, we should give ourselves to this Christly task.

I summon you to it to-day, even as I summon myself, that our conduct in the days to be may be far more consistent than it has been in the days that are gone.

Now, the lessons in this incident are many, and they are written large for us.

Let us do the unusual thing, if that be necessary to get the attention and win the heart of some soul that has missed the upward way.

- Let us combine and co-operate.

- Let us pray together and go together, if haply by such earnest effort we may win that difficult case.

Pass no case by. Leave no case unapproached, unhelped. Take them as you can see them, and bethink you concerning them, and do your best to win them to CHRIST. Oh, my brother men and my gentle sisters, let us care for human souls these passing summer days like we ought!

How is it that we are often keenly sensible to physical distress, to the cry of the body, and yet of the deeper distress of the soul we are often unmindful and insensible?

Why is it that we do not care like we ought for human souls?

For one reason, I say we do not care because we do not sufficiently realize their condition. Oh, if we realized that outside of CHRIST the battle is lost for a human soul, surely that realization would bestir us to make the best effort for them possible. Many a time we are quiet and uncommunicative touching human souls, because we realize so keenly our own unworthiness.

Let me be personal for a moment to say that if I had waited until I felt worthy to approach a human soul - worthy in myself - I would have been dumb as death on such subject all these years I have been a Christian. I never saw the day that I felt worthy, for one second, to speak to anybody about his soul. I must say, with the apostle of old: **"I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."**

- If I had waited until I felt personally worthy to join the church, I should never have joined any church.

- If I had waited until I felt personally worthy to preach the Gospel of the grace of GOD, I should never have preached one time.

Oh, we are not to preach ourselves at an, but to preach CHRIST JESUS the Lord.

Many a time we ought to begin our conversation with an humble confession of our own pitiful frailties and weaknesses, and then go on to say to the friend whom we approach: "**I do not preach myself**" - you must understand that. "**I preach Christ Jesus the Lord.**" All our worthiness comes from CHRIST JESUS, "**who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**"

Two business men on the outskirts of the city lived side by side. One was a church man, and had been for long years, and the other a non-church man.

The church man went to church every Sunday morning, and the non-church man went never at all. But they came into the city from its suburbs every week day morning, on the trolley, to perform their tasks in the city, and through the long years they went back and forth on the train together every week day. It came about, in the strange providence of GOD, that both were sick unto death at the same time. Each lay upon the dying bed the same day, and the non-church man's wife, herself a Christian, was in such an agony about him that she was constrained to say: "Husband, wouldn't you like for a good Christian man to come and talk with you about religion - you are very sick."

And he slowly shook his head and said: "Not at all. My neighbor, Mr. So-and-so, IS a church man, and in all these long years we have ridden thousands of miles together, and we have talked about every subject upon which men converse, but he has never said a word to me about religion. Why, there could not be anything in it, if a church man, who has been with me hundreds of days and has traveled with me thousands of miles, has never essayed to speak to me one word about religion. If he could pass such subject by through these long years, and be silent about it, I will go away just like I am." And so he died.

Oh, if we would realize as we ought the peril and the worth of souls!

The hour will be gone in two minutes more. Oh, if we would realize as we ought the peril and worth of souls! Won't you parents realize before it is too late?

I went to a dying son in Dallas, and did my best to win him, and finally I said to him: "Oh, my boy, how much your Father is interested in you!" And then searchingly he looked at me out of his deep, sad eyes, and he said: "What is that?"

I said: "Your Father is so interested in you. He sobbed about your religious condition to-day as we talked. I have come to you at his request."

And then he looked at me long and hungrily, and said: "Isn't that strange? Father never said a word to me about religion in all his life."

Strange? Why, it is horrible! Strange? Why, it is atrocious! Strange? Why, it is monstrous! Strange? Why, it is criminal! Why, that kind of conduct feeds hell on hope, and is enough to put crepe on the door to GOD's Heaven above!

Parents, speak the all-important word now to your children. Oh, my fellow-men, citizens, toilers at all life's tasks, professional men, business men, speak the right word now to your friends! Oh, ye who love the Lord, get you to-day at this task, like you ought - this task of winning souls!

THE CLOSING PRAYER.

And now we appeal to Thee, O GOD, who heareth prayer, to lodge Thy truth in our every heart. O, make us to be right in Thy sight, concerning this greatest of all causes - that of winning lost people to CHRIST. We would repent of every evil way ourselves. We would bow our hearts to the very dust, because we have been so inconsistent, so frail, our lives so incongruous as Christians, saved and called to win souls. We have been so often neglectful of duty. We have allowed little things to turn us from the plain course of right. We have allowed people to hurt our testimony for CHRIST. We have allowed checkered experiences thus to hurl; us. O JESUS, Master, blessed Saviour, make these Thy people to be right in Thy sight this day, and fit them for their matchless task of pointing people to the heavenly way. And we pray Thee for Thy saving favor upon all this city.

O, grant that during these midsummer days the people may hear in the right way, from lips which GOD will anoint, the right sort of appeals concerning personal religion. And may the difficult cases - the hardened, the aged, the sinful, the duty-neglecting, the deeply backslidden, the God-forgetting, whoever and wherever such people may be - may they all and each be properly approached by these friends of GOD, to the end that every such case may be won to CHRIST. And may there be no vain confidence in arms of flesh for this superhuman task. May our confidence all be stayed on GOD, and may He guide us and empower us at every step by His own omnific Spirit, so that, night and day, we shall do His will these passing days.

And as you go now, may the blessing of the triune God, even of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be granted YOU all and each, to abide with you forever. Amen.

~ end of chapter 16 ~
