

to see sinners' hearts broken. The secret of success lies in all-consuming zeal, all-subduing travail for souls. Read the sermons of Wesley and of Whitfield, and what is there in them? It is no severe criticism to say that they are scarcely worthy to have survived, and yet these sermons wrought marvels, and well they might, for both preachers could truly say—

The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

In order to understand such preaching, you need to see and hear the man; you want his tearful eye, his glowing countenance, his pleading tone, his bursting heart. Do any of you desire your children's conversions? You shall have them when you agonize for them.

Now for a minute or two let me show you the reasons for it. Why is it that there must be this anxiety before desirable results are gained? For answer, it might suffice us to say that God has so appointed it. It is the order of nature. The child is not born into the world without the sorrows of the mother, nor is the bread which sustains life procured from the earth without toil. "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread," was a part of the primeval curse. Now, as it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual; there shall not come the blessing we seek, without first of all the earnest yearning for it. Why, it is so even in ordinary business. We say, "No sweat, no sweet," "No pains, no gains," "No mill, no meal." If there be no labour there shall be no profit. He that would be rich must toil for it. He that would acquire fame must spend and be spent to win it. It is ever so. There must ever be the travail and then the desire cometh. God has so appointed it. Let us accept the decree.

But better still, He has ordained this for our good. If souls were given us without any effort, anxiety or prayer, it would be our loss to have it so, because the anxieties which throb within a compassionate spirit exercise his grace. They produce grateful love to God; they try his faith in the power of God to save others. They drive him to the mercy seat. They strengthen his patience and perseverance, and every grace within the man is educated and increased by his travail for souls. As labour is now a blessing, so also is soul-travail. Men are fashioned more fully into the likeness of Christ thereby, and the whole Church is by the same emotion quickened into energy.

Besides, dear friends, the zeal that God excites within us is often the means of effecting the purpose which we desire. After all, God does not give conversions to eloquence, but to heart. The power in the hand of God's Spirit for conversions is heart coming into contact with heart. Truth from the heart goes to the heart. This is God's battle axe and weapons of war in His crusade. He is pleased to use the yearnings, longings, and sympathies of Christian men, as the means of compelling the careless to think, constraining the hardened to feel, and driving the unbelieving to consider. I have little confidence in elaborate speech and polished sentences, as the means of reaching men's hearts, but I have great faith in that simple-minded Christian woman, who must have souls converted or she will weep her eyes out over them; and in that humble Christian who prays day and night in secret, and then avails himself of every opportunity to address a loving word to sinners. The emo-

tion we feel, and the affection we bear, are the most powerful implements of soul-winning. God the Holy Ghost usually breaks hard hearts by tender hearts.

Besides, the travail qualifies for the proper taking care of the off-spring. God does not commit His new-born children to people who do not care to see conversions. If He ever allows them to fall into such hands, they suffer very serious loss thereby. Who is so fit to encourage a new-born believer as the man who first anguished before the Lord for his conversion? Those you have wept over and prayed for you will be sure to encourage and assist. The church that never travailed, should God send her a hundred converts, would be unfit to train them. She would not know what to do with little children, and would leave them to much suffering.

Once more, there is a great benefit in the law which makes travail necessary to spiritual birth, because it secures all the glory to God. If you want to be lowered in your own esteem, try to convert a child. Why, sir, you never think yourself so great a fool as after trying in your own strength to bring a sinner to the Saviour. Oh, how often have I come back defeated from arguing with an awakened person whom I have sought to comfort. I did think I had some measure of skill in handling sorrowful cases, but I have been compelled to say to myself, "What a simpleton I am! God the Holy Ghost must take this case in hand, for I am foiled."

Let us now notice how this travail shows itself. Usually when God intends greatly to bless a church, it will begin in this way—Two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs, and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the church revived rules them. They think of it when they go to rest, they dream of it on their bed, they muse on it in the streets. This one thing eats them up. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners. They travail in birth for souls.

When the sun rises the mountain tops first catch the light, and those who constantly live near to God will be the first to feel the influence of the coming refreshing. The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleaders and lovers of souls, and by His grace we will shake all London from end to end yet. The work would go on without the mass of you, Christians; many of you would only hinder the march of the army, but give us a dozen lion-like, lamb-like men, burning with intense love to Christ and souls, and nothing will be impossible to their faith. The most of us are not worthy to unloose the latches of ardent saints. I often feel I am not so myself, but I aspire and long to be reckoned among them. Oh, may God give us this first sign of the travail in the earnest ones and twos.

By degrees the individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the prayer-meetings become very different. The brother who talked twenty minutes of what he called prayer, and yet never asked for a single thing, gives up his oration and falls to pleading with many tears and broken sentences. The friend who used to relate his experience and go through the doctrines of grace, and call that prayer, forgets the ringmarole and begins agonizing before the throne. And not only this, but little knots here and there come together in their

cottages and in their little rooms to cry mightily to God. The result will be that the minister, even if he does not know of the feeling in the hearts of his people, will grow fervent himself. He will preach more evangelically, more tenderly, more earnestly. He will be no longer formal, or cold, or stereotyped. He will be all alive.

Meanwhile, not with the preacher only will be the blessing, but with his hearers who love the Lord. One will be trying a plan for getting in the young people; another will be looking after the strangers in the aisles, who come only now and then. One brother will make a vehement attempt to preach the Gospel at the corner of the street. Another will open a room down a dark court; another will visit lodging-houses and hospitals. All sorts of holy plans will be invented, and zeal will break out in many directions.

All this will be spontaneous, nothing will be forced. If you want to get a revival, as the term is, you can do it, just as you can grow tasteless strawberries in winter, by artificial heat. There are ways and means of doing that kind of thing, but the genuine work of God needs no such planning and scheming.

With great brevity, let us consider that the result is often very surprising. It is frequently surprising for rapidity. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." God's works are not tied by time. The more spiritual a force is, the less it lies within the chains of time. The influences of the Spirit of God are a force most spiritual, and more quick than anything beneath the sun. As soon as we agonize in soul the Holy Spirit can, if He pleases, concert the person for whom we have pleaded. While we are yet speaking He hears, and before we call He answers.

But the result is surprising, not only for its rapidity, but for the greatness of it. It is said, "Shall a nation be born at once?" for as soon as ever Zion was in distress about her children, tens of thousands came and built up Jerusalem, and re-established the fallen state. So in answer to prayer, God does not only give speedy blessings, but great blessings. There were fervent prayers in that upper room "before the day of Pentecost had fully come," and what a great answer it was when, after Peter's sermon, some three thousand were ready to confess their faith in Christ, and to be baptized. Shall we never see such things again? Is the Spirit straitened? Has His arm waxed short? Nay, verily, but we clog and hinder Him. He cannot do any mighty work here because of our unbelief; and, if our unbelief were cast out, and if prayer went up to God with eagerness, and vehemence, and importunity, then would a blessing descend so copious as to amaze us all.

My brethren, when a church is not serving God, mischief is brewing within herself. While she is not bringing others in, her own heart is becoming weak in its pulsations, and her entire constitution is a prey to decline. The Church must either bring forth children unto God, or die of consumption. She has no alternative but that. A church must either be fruitful or not.

Let us notice the woe which will surely come to those who hinder the travail of the Church and so prevent the bringing forth of her children. An earnest spirit cannot complete its exhortations to zeal without pronouncing a denunciation upon the indifferent.

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