

Personal Work

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Note.—This is an address delivered by the President of the St. Catharines District Epworth League, at the recent Convention at Beamsville, and secured for our readers by the good offices of Rev. B. Byre. It contains essential truth relating to real success in Epworth League work on every District and in every local organization.—Ed.

In the first place, let us deal with the Word. The first chapter of John's Gospel is an abiding testimony to the value of personal work. Andrew found Simon, Philip found Nathaniel. There was no great meeting, no multitude, no excitement. A man has made a discovery of the utmost importance to himself, and soon felt that it was quite as important to others. So he went to the nearest man, and said, "I have found the Christ, come!"

In each case there was first, a discovery. Every Jew knew of the Messianic hope, and thought it was vague, it was real. So, when Andrew and Philip found by Jesus' revealing of himself to them, that this was indeed the Christ, they did not hesitate to make their discovery known. Before, they could have said nothing about Jesus, but would have had more than a passing interest. But "Messiah!" that was worth telling. He who would win others to faith in the Sent of God, must himself first know Him, not only know about Him.

There is no more striking illustration in the New Testament, of God's use of two methods than in the story of Philip the evangelist.

He had conducted a great revival in Samaria. The people with one accord gave heed unto the things he spoke, and the work attracted so much attention that Peter and John went down from Jerusalem to take part in it. Then on the heels of that great awakening, Philip is sent to the high road from Jerusalem to Africa, to meet one man and preach to him. Philip's method with the Ethiopian eunuch was a model for personal workers. He used the Word. He explained it. He went from the known to the unknown. He preached unto him Jesus. He won his man.

The conversion of Cornelius is a type. Many a man is ready to receive the gospel, who waits only the teaching, that will show him what he needs.

There are incidents of that sort in nearly every revival. Not all the unconverted are defiant and deliberate sinners. They desire better things.

They have long been anxious for a happier life, and many a Christian worker who has gone to such persons a little unwillingly, has been shocked by the remark, "I have been hoping for a long time, that somebody would speak to me about religion, but nobody has ever seemed to care." Are there those in our midst who can say that of us?

Always remember that the centre of every prayer is at your door. From that point the lines go out to the world's end.

Charles Spurgeon, in his day the greatest of all preachers to great crowds, said: If the kingdom is ever to come to our Lord—and come it will—it never will come through a few ministers, missionaries or evangelists preaching the gospel. It must come through every one of us preaching it—in the shop and by the fire-side, when walking abroad, and when sitting in the chamber. We must, all of us, be always endeavoring to save some.

The meaning of personal work for souls, is bringing souls one by one by personal effort to Jesus, as St. Andrew did. To this work every Christian is called, how ever weak or poor, or ignorant, or un-

practiced. For every one who hears Christ is bound to get another to come. Each member of Christ's body, which is the Church, must be a witness for his Master.

In short, every Christian must accept the trust of souls, and, as professing Christians we dare not forget that Christ came, not to save the righteous, but sinners.

When Jesus announced his Messiahship to individuals they heard him eagerly; when he announced it to a public assembly they condemned him to die.

The plain sermon which is followed up by personal work on the part of the church members will be more effective than the most superb effort of a great orator, which begins and ends in itself.

Whatever things a Christian can do, personal work for God is the one thing he can do. The surest way to start a revival is to start after the unsaved individual nearest you. Of the multitudes who have been converted in great revivals, the vast majority cherish the memory of some Christian's personal work as the thing which finally turned the scale. Is



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it true that the majority of our church members have never won a soul for Christ? What shall we do about it?

Consider a few reasons why we should seek souls.

1. They are lost. It is understood that both the wandering sheep and the coin are lost. It seems to be taken for granted that the lost sheep cannot find its way back. Of course the lost coin cannot restore itself to the purse. In the case of the prodigal son, it is true that he finds his way back to his former home. It is implied, however, that it is the father's love that brings the son back. The son comes to himself only because he cannot forget how earnestly his father must wish for his return.

It is nowhere represented in the Bible that any soul must wait until some one comes after him before he can return to God's favor. But it is taken for granted that he will not. "How shall they hear," explains the apostle, "without a preacher?"

It was to win these "lost" ones that God sent His Son. He leaves the society of

the sinless, and the communion of Heaven for an earthly allotment of toil and exposure. He must traverse dark mountains. To lift the victim of sin and the heir of wrath to his shoulders, as the recovered and ransomed one, that shoulder must bear the cross of shame and agony. He came to save.

2. They are weary of recovery. Some one has said, that the true value of the soul was the great discovery of Jesus.

Philips Brooks, in his Yale Lectures, notes as the secret of our Lord's success as a soul winner, that he recognized the true worth of the soul.

It is lost to humanity in the abstract that Jesus glorifies, but the individual soul, and all the success that has come to those who have struggled for the rights of man must be traced back to our Lord's teaching.

No one can look at men from Jesus' point of view, and with his spirit, without being a soul winner.

3. Seek them for Christ's sake. To seek a soul because it is worth saving is surely Christian. But the animating motive in all successful soul-winning must ever be "for the sake of Christ." We shall become professional, our conviction will gradually run out, or we shall gradually lose our sense of the value of the soul, unless we constantly remember that Christ sends us, and promises to be with us.

4. Seek them, for the world's sake. The saving of a soul brings back something that is lost to society. In the old slave days men and women were held at so much per head. They were counted as worth so much because they could work.

How much more is a soul worth, an intelligence, a spiritual entity, a member of the great family of men!

5. Seek them for the Church's sake. Every church needs these unconverted ones. Souls that have been brought back from the "far country" will appreciate at their full value the blessings of home, and add to its worth.

6. Seek them for the sake of Heaven. We are told that Heaven rejoices over one sinner that returns.

"They rejoice because an heir of Heaven has been led to claim his inheritance. Heaven belongs to the penitent soul, and he belongs to heaven. Every member of the Church of Christ, who is as the lost sheep or the lost piece of money, or as the younger son, is one lost out of the family of God.

Some one asks, "How shall we do it?" Go after them! This is the only way to find the lost, as it is the only way to persuade some of them to come back. The majority of the lost do not believe they are lost. They look upon the Churches as mere ecclesiastical institutions, or as fashionable club houses. They do not regard them as organizations for the sole purpose of saving men. They will never be persuaded, unless they see on the part of Christians, an earnest effort to put the doctrines of Christ into practice. Some of our Churches practically say to those outside, "If you do not come, you can stay away. We give you a pleasant church, good singing, and good preaching. If you don't come, our responsibility is ended." The world will never be brought to Christ by such Churches.

Bring them back! The parable of the supper shows what the thought of Christ is regarding the indifferent and careless. In our earnestness, we should fairly seize upon them, compelling them by every art of persuasion to accept a place at their Lord's table.

Go to them; bring them back with the deep passionate earnestness of a soul redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a soul of fire for souls; seize the opportunity. Persuade with conviction, and affection! "Come!" "I have found Jesus."