



Counsel
for
Christian
Workers







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I

AN EARNEST MAN

You perhaps may have heard the story of Mr. Whitefield, who made it his wont wherever he stayed to talk to the members of the household about their souls – with each one personally. But stopping at a certain house with a Colonel, who was all that could be wished except a Christian, he was so pleased with the hospitality he received, and so charmed with the general character of the good Colonel and his wife and daughters, that he did not like to speak to them about decision, as he would have done if they had been less amiable characters. He had stopped with them for a week, and during the last night, the Spirit of God visited him so that he could not sleep.

‘These people,’ said he, ‘have been very kind to me, and I have not been faithful to them; I must do it before I go; I must tell them that whatever good thing they have, if they do not believe in Jesus they are lost.’ He arose and prayed.

After praying he still felt contention in his spirit. His old nature said, ‘I cannot do it,’ but the Holy



Spirit seemed to say, 'Leave them not without warning.' At last he thought of a device, and prayed God to accept it; he wrote upon a diamond-shaped pane of glass in the window with his ring these words: 'One thing thou lackest.' He could not bring himself to speak to them, but went his way with many a prayer for their conversion.

He had no sooner gone than the good woman of the house, who was a great admirer of him, said, 'I will go up to his room: I like to look at the very place where the man of God has been.' She went up and noticed on the windowpane those words, 'One thing thou lackest.' It struck her with conviction in a moment. 'Ah!' said she, 'I thought he did not care much about us, for I knew he always pleaded with those with whom he stopped, and when I found that he did not do so with us, I thought we had vexed him: but I see how it was; he was too tender in mind to speak to us.'

She called her daughter up. 'Look there, girls!' said she, 'see what Mr Whitefield has written on the window! "One thing thou lackest." Call up your father.' And the father came up and read that too, 'One thing thou lackest!' and around the bed whereon the man of God had slept they all knelt down and sought that God would give them the one thing they lacked, and ere they left that chamber they had found that one thing, and the whole household rejoiced in Jesus.





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It is not long ago since I met with a friend, one of whose church members preserves that very pane of glass in her family as an heirloom. Now, if you cannot admonish and warn in one way, do it in another: but take care to clear your soul of the blood of your relatives and friends, so that it may never crimson your skirts and accuse you before God's bar. So live and so speak and teach, by some means or other, that you shall have been faithful to God and faithful to the souls of men.

Earnestness often gives prudence, and puts a man in the possession of tact, if not of talent. Andrew used what ability he had. If he had been as some young men are of my acquaintance, he would have said, 'I should like to serve God. How I should like to preach! And I should require a large congregation.' Well, there is a pulpit in every street in London, there is a most wide and effectual door for preaching in this great city of ours beneath God's blue sky. But this young zealot would rather prefer an easier berth than the open air; and because he is not invited to the largest pulpits, does nothing.

How much better it would be if, like Andrew, he began to use the ability he had among those who are accessible to him, and from that stepped to something else, and from that to something else, advancing year by year! If Andrew had not been the means of converting his brother, the probabilities are that he never would have been an apostle. Christ had some reason in the



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choice of his apostles to their office, and perhaps the ground of his choice of Andrew as an apostle was this: 'he is an earnest man,' said he, 'he brought me Simon Peter; he is always speaking privately to individuals I will make an apostle of him.'

Young men, if you become diligent in tract distribution, diligent in the Sunday school, you are likely men to be made into ministers; but if you stop and do nothing until you can do every-thing, you will remain useless – an impediment to the church instead of being a help to her. Dear sisters in Jesus Christ, you must none of you dream that you are in a position in which you can do nothing at all. That were such a mistake in providence as God cannot commit. You must have some talent entrusted to you, and something given you to do which no one else can do. Find out, then, what your sphere is, and occupy it. Ask God to tell you what is your niche, and stand in it, occupying the place till Jesus Christ shall come and give you your reward. Use what ability you have, and use it at once.

Andrew proved his wisdom in that he set great store by a single soul. He bent all his efforts at first upon one man. Afterwards, Andrew, through the Holy Spirit, was made useful to scores, but he began with one. What a task for the arithmetician, to value one soul! One soul sets all heaven's bells ringing by its repentance. One sinner that repenteth maketh angels rejoice. What if you spend a whole life pleading and





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labouring for the conversion of that one child? If you win that pearl it shall pay you your life worth. Be not therefore dull and discouraged because your class declines in numbers, or because the mass of those with whom you labour reject your testimony. If a man could earn but one in a day he might be satisfied. 'One what?' saith one. I meant not one penny, but one thousand pounds. 'Ah,' say you, 'that would be an immense reward.' So if you earn but one soul you must reckon what that one is; it is one for numeration, but for value it exceeds all that earth could show. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his soul? and what loss would it be to you, if you did lose all the world, and gained your soul, and God made you useful in the gaining of the souls of others? Be content, and labour in your sphere, even if it be small, and you will be wise.

You may imitate Andrew in *not going far afield to do good*. Many Christians do all the good they can five miles off from their own house, when the time they take to go there and back might be well spent in the vineyard at home. I do not think it would be a wise regulation of the parochial authorities if they required the inhabitants of St. Mary, Newington, to remove the snow from the pavement of St. Pancras, and the inhabitants of St. Pancras to keep clean the pavement of St. Mary, Newington. It is best and most convenient that each householder should sweep before his own door; so it is our duty to do,





as believers, all the good we can in the place where God has been pleased to locate us, and especially in our own households.

If every man has a claim upon me, much more my own offspring. If every woman has some demand upon me as to her soul, so far as my ability goes, much more such as are of my own flesh and blood. Piety must begin at home as well as charity. Conversion should begin with those who are nearest to us in ties of relationship. I stir you up, not to be attempting missionary labours for India, not to be casting eyes of pity across to Africa, not to be occupied so much with tears for popish and heathen lands, as for your own children, your own flesh and blood, your own neighbours, your own acquaintance. Lift up your cry to heaven *for them*, and then afterwards you shall preach among the nations. Andrew goes to Cappadocia in his afterlife, but he begins with his brother; and you shall labour where you please in years to come, but first of all your own household, first of all those who are under your own shadow must receive your guardian care. Be wise in this thing; use the ability you have, and use it amongst those who are near at hand.

Perhaps somebody will be saying, 'How did Andrew persuade Simon Peter to come to Christ?' He did so, first, by narrating his own personal experience: he said, 'We have found the Messiah.' What you have experienced of Christ tell to others. He did so next





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by intelligently explaining to him what it was he had found. He did not say he had found some one who had impressed him, but he knew not who he was; he told him he had found the Messiah, that is, Christ. Be clear in your knowledge of the gospel and your experience of it, and then tell the good news to those whose souls you seek. Andrew had power over Peter because of his own decided conviction. He did not say, 'I hope I have found Christ,' but, 'I have found him.' He was sure of that. Get full assurance of your own salvation. There is no weapon like it. He that speaks doubtingly of what he would convince another, asks that other to doubt his testimony. Be positive in your experience and your assurance, for this will help you.



Andrew had power over Peter because he put the good news before him in an earnest fashion. He did not say to him, as though it were a commonplace fact, 'The Messiah has come,' but no, he communicated it to him as the most weighty of all messages with becoming tones and gestures, I doubt not, 'We have found the Messiah, which is called Christ.' To your own kinsfolk tell your belief, your enjoyments, and your assurance, tell all judiciously, with assurance of the truth of it, and who can tell whether God may not bless your work?

Andrew won a soul, won his brother's soul, won such a treasure! He won no other than that Simon, who at the first cast of the gospel net, when Christ had





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made him a soul-fisherman, caught three thousand souls at a single haul! Peter, a very prince in the Christian Church, one of the mightiest of the servants of the Lord in all his usefulness, would be a comfort to Andrew. I should not wonder but what Andrew would say in days of doubt and fear, 'Blessed be God that he has made Peter so useful! Blessed be God that ever I spoke to Peter! What I cannot do, Peter will help to do; and while I sit down in my helplessness, I can feel thankful that my dear brother Peter is honoured in bringing souls to Christ.' Your fingers are yet to wake to ecstasy the living lyre of a heart that up till now has not been tuned to the praise of Christ, you are to kindle the fire which shall light up a sacred sacrifice of a consecrated life to Christ. Only be up and doing for the Lord Jesus, be importunate and prayerful, be zealous and self-sacrificing. I make no doubt of it, that, when we have proved our God by prayer, he will pour down such a blessing that we shall not have room to receive it.

