

The Qualifications for Soul Winning

D.L. Moody:

1. Shake off the vipers that are in the Church, formalism, pride, and self-importance, etc.
2. It is the only happy life to live for the salvation of souls.
3. We must be willing to do little things for Christ.
4. Must be of good courage.
5. Must be cheerful.

God had no children too weak, but a great many too strong to make use of. God stands in no need of our strength or wisdom, but of our ignorance, of our weakness; let us but give these to Him, and He can make use of us in winning souls.

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3.

Now we all want to shine; the mother wishes it for her boy, when she sends him to school, the father for his lad, when he goes off to college; and here God tells us who are to shine - not statesmen, or warriors, or such like, that shine but for a season - but such as will shine for ever and ever; those, namely, who win souls to Christ; the little boy even who persuades one to come to Christ.

Speaking of this, Paul counts up five things (1 Cor. 1:27-9) that God makes use of - the weak things, the foolish things, the base things, the despised things, and the things which are not, and for this purpose, that no flesh might glory in his sight - all five being just such as we should despise. He can and will use us, just when we are willing to be humble for Christ's sake, and so for six thousand years God has been teaching men; so with an ass's jawbone Samson slew his thousands (Judges 15:15), so at the blowing of rams' horns the walls of Jericho fell (Joshua 6:20). Let God work in His own way, and with His own instruments; let us all rejoice that He should, and let us too get into the position in which God can use us.

There is much mourning to-day over false "isms," infidelity, and the like, but sum them all up, and I do not fear them one half so much as that dead and cold formalism that has crept into the Church of God. The unbelieving world, and these skeptics holding out their false lights, are watching you and me: when Jacob put away his idols, he could go up to Bethel and get strength and the blessing - so will it be with the Church of God. A viper fixes upon the hand of the shipwrecked Paul; immediately he is judged by the barbarians some criminal unfit to live; but he shakes it off into the fire, and suffers no harm, and now they are ready to worship him, and ready too to hear and receive his message: the Church of God must shake off the vipers that have fastened on hand and heart too, ere men will hear. Where one ungodly man reads this Bible, a hundred read you and me: and if they find nothing in us, they set the whole thing aside as a myth.

Again, a man who has found out what his true work is, winning souls to Christ, and does it, such is the happiest man. Not the richest are this - least of all those who have just got converted for themselves, and into the Church - lost what pleasure the world could give, and found none other. Job's captivity turned away when he began praying for his friends; and so will all who thus work for others shine not in heaven alone and hereafter, but here as well, and now.

But you say "I haven't got the ability." Well, God doesn't call you to do Dr. Bonar's work, or Dr. Duff's work, else He had given you their ability, their talent. The word is, "To every man his work." I have a work to do, laid out for me in the secret counsels of eternity; no other can do it. If I neglect it, it is not true that some other will do it; it will remain undone. And if, for the work laid upon us, we feel we have not the ability or talent necessary, then we have a throne of grace; and God never sends, unless that He is willing to give the strength and wisdom. The instruments He often uses may seem all unlikely, yet when did they fail? - when once? and why not? Because He had fitted them out as well.

He sent Moses to Egypt to deliver His people - not an eloquent, but a stuttering man. He refuses a while, at last he went; and no man once sent by God ever did break down.

So was Elisha a most unlikely man to be a successor to the great prophet Elijah. Men would have chosen some

famous man, some professor in the school of the prophets. God took one from the plough; but He gave him what was needed. Elisha had but to keep by his master to the end; and he received even a double portion of the Spirit. And if we want to get it, we too must keep by the Lord, nor ever lose sight of Him, should He, as Elijah Elisha, in one way or another try our faith.

And further, we must be ready to do little things for God; many are willing to do the great things. I dare say hundreds would have been ready to occupy this pulpit to-day. How many of them would be as willing to teach a dirty class in the ragged school?

I remember, one afternoon I was preaching, observing a young lady from the house I was staying at, in the audience. I had heard she taught in the Sabbath-school, which I knew was at the same hour; and so I asked her, after service, how she came to be there? "Oh," said she, "my class is but five little boys, and I thought it did not matter for them." And yet among these there might have been, who knows, a Luther or a Knox, the beginning of a stream of blessing, that would have gone on widening and ever widening; and besides, one soul is worth all the kingdoms of the earth.

Away in America, a young lady was sent to a boarding-school, and was there led to Christ; not only so, but taught that she ought to work for Him, By-and-by she goes home, and now she seeks, in one way and another, to work for Him, but without finding how. She asks for a class in her church Sunday-school, but the superintendent is obliged to tell her that he has already more than enough of teachers. One day, going along the street, she sees a little boy struck by his companion, and crying bitterly. She goes up and speaks to him; asks him what the trouble is? The boy thinks she is mocking him, and replies sullenly. She speaks kindly, tries to persuade him to school. He does not want to learn. She coaxes him to come and hear her and the rest singing there; and so next Sunday he comes with her. She gets a corner in the school of well-dressed scholars for herself and her charge. He sits and listens, full of wonder. On going home, he tells his mother he has been among the angels. At first at a loss, she becomes angry, when a question or two brings out that he has been to a Protestant Sunday-school; and the father, on coming home, forbids his going back, on pain of flogging. Next Sunday, however, he goes, and is flogged, and so again, and yet again, till one Sunday, he begs to be flogged before going, that he may not be kept thinking of it all the time. The father relents a little, and promises him a holiday every Saturday afternoon, if he will not go to Sunday-school. The lad agrees, sees his teacher, who offers to teach him then. How many wealthy young folks would give up their Saturdays to train one poor ragged urchin in the way of salvation? Some time after, at his work, the lad is on one of the railway cars. The train starts suddenly; he slips through, and the wheels pass over his legs; he asks the doctor if he will live to get home; it is impossible. "Then," says he, "tell father and mother that I am going to heaven, and want to meet them there." Will the work she did seem little now to the young lady? Or is it nothing that even one thus grateful waits her yonder?

Another thing we want is, to be of good courage. Three or four times this comes out in the first chapter of Joshua; and I have observed that God never uses a man that is always looking on the dark side of things: what we do for Him let us do cheerfully, not because it is our duty - not that we should sweep away the word but because it is our privilege. What would my wife or children say if I spoke of loving them because it was my duty to do so? And my mother - if I go to see her once a year, and were to say - "Mother, I am come all this way to discharge what feel to be my duty in visiting you;" might she not rightly reply - "My son, if this is all that has brought you, you might have spared coming at all!" and go own in broken-hearted sorrow to the grave?

A London minister, a friend of mine, lately pointed out a family of seven, all of whom he was just receiving into the Church. Their story was this: going to church, he had to pass by a window, looking up at which one day, he saw a baby looking out; he smiled - the baby smiled again. Next time he passes he looks up again, smiles, and the baby smiles back. A third time going by, he looks up, and seeing the baby, throws it a kiss - which the baby returns to him. Time after time he has to pass the window, and now cannot refrain from looking up each time: and each time there are more faces to receive his smiling greeting; till by-and-by he sees the whole family grouped at the window - father, mother, and all. The father conjectures the happy, smiling stranger must be a minister, and so, next Sunday morning, after they have received at the window the usual greeting, two of the children, ready dressed, are sent out to follow him: they enter his church, hear him preach, and carry back to their parents the report that they never heard such preaching; and what preaching could equal that of one who had so smiled on them? Soon the rest come to the church too, and are brought in - all by a smile. Let us not go about, hanging our heads like a bulrush; if Christ gives joy, let us live it! The whole world is in all matters for the very best thing - you always want to get the best possible thing for your money; let us show, then, that our religion is the very best thing: men with long, gloomy faces are never wise in the winning of souls.

I was preaching in Jacksonville, and, at the house in which I stayed, my attention was attracted by a little boy,

The Qualifications for Soul Winning

who bore a different name from the household, and yet was in all things and in all respects treated as one of themselves; to the other children he was "brother," and they were "brothers" and "sisters" to him, and with them he came up to the mother for the same good-night kiss.

By-and-by I asked the lady of the house who it was. She told me the father of the boy was a missionary out in India; some years before, father and mother had come home with their five children to have them educated. After being home a short time, the father resolved to return to India; wishing to leave the mother with the children till their education should be finished. She wanted to go back with him; he opposed to it, saying it was hard enough for him to leave them, for her it must be impossible. Still she wished to go, - she had received and been some blessing in India, and she would give up even all for Christ.

Ultimately it was arranged that the children should be received into various families, - treated as part of them, - and that father and mother together should return. So with the boy the mother came to this friend's and stayed a few days along with him. The night before she had leave, sitting with the lady of the house, she told her how anxious she was that her boy should receive the impression that his mother had for Christ's sake cheerfully left him behind, and that for this end she wished to leave him without a tear at parting. The struggle this would cost the lady well knew, especially as the boy was of a peculiarly amiable disposition.

Next morning, passing the door of the mother's room, the lady overheard a sobbing, struggling prayer for strength to do what was on her heart to do. In a short time the mother came down with smiling, cheerful face; and looking so, she took leave of her boy, to go by rail some miles further on to bid a like farewell to another of her family. She went with her husband to India.

A short year after, a still, quiet voice came to her, to come up to meet her Saviour. And would not a welcome await her there, who had so loved Him here, and so cheerfully served Him?

"They that be wise shall shine, as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3). The Lord help us as humbly, devoutly, and cheerfully to abound in His work!

--Sermon delivered by Dwight L. Moody in Dr. Bonar's church, Edinburgh, Scotland, 7th December, 1873.