

Chapter 34. Soul-winning

"He who wins souls is wise." – Proverbs 11:30

In an article in *The Student Movement* of February, 1901, on "A Spiritual Awakening," by H.W. Oldham, I found the following sentences: "In the constitutions of most Student's Christian Unions it is stated that **the chief aim** of the S. C. Union is **to lead students to become disciples of Jesus Christ**. But if the question is pressed home, 'Are students actually being won from indifference and unbelief to faith in Jesus Christ?' the reply must be that, although this is the case in a few instances, in the majority of Unions it is very doubtful. Some Unions, discouraged by previous failure, have become sceptical as to the possibility of winning men for Christ in circumstances so difficult as their own. They may carry on to some extent **traditional methods of aggressive work**, but have ceased to expect to do more than strengthen such as already have faith. The Executive of the General College Department have definitely set **the spiritual awakening of students** in the forefront of their policy. If the local Unions will rally round the Executive, we may fully expect to see God working in the lives of those around us. The love that won us, can win many. It is right to recognise the seriousness of adopting this aim. **It involves close companionship with Jesus Christ in holy living, in self-sacrifice, in loving service**; it requires submission to the correction and control of God's Spirit. We must lift the aim of **winning students for Christ** out of the background in our work and **place it first**. Our Unions have more than sufficient mechanical workers. They need men and women with definite aims, who will think and pray, and pray and work, until their Union is a fit instrument in God's hand for transforming the lives of students."

In an editorial in the same number, we read with regard to the Day of Prayer, "There are many confession, and many requests which we need to make on the day of prayer, but we feel that the most urgent prayer must be for a spiritual awakening. We have been gradually recognising the fact that the most of our Unions **are not winning students for Christ**, and some have begun to realise, with dismay, that this fact has caused them very little sorrow. 'It is certainly a misfortune that students have not been won for Christ, but what can we do?' Truly a spiritual awakening is needed; needed in our own hearts. When it comes we shall soon find out what we must do about this situation. Where is the passionate longing to help students? Where is the urgent prayer for souls that will not be denied? At the very heart of the

whole matter is our *lack of interest*. What interests us will influence people. It is only when deep down among the eternal interests of our souls, there is a fire for **the passionate desire to lead people to Christ**, that we shall meet those who need our help, and who will welcome it. It is only when words and deeds burst from the **burning passion of desire to help people**, where we will find the opportunities of influencing lives. For it is only where there is a desire like this, that the Holy Spirit is a fellow-worker with us. And without Him we are powerless either to find those who are ready, or having found them, can help them. Shall we not unitedly ask that a **passion for souls** may be birthed in each of us on the day of prayer?"

Let me add an extract from an article on "Indian Needs," in the January number of the same paper. The writer (Rev. W.E.S. Holland, formerly Trav. Sec. B.C.C.U.) had spoken of the central purpose in the creation of Mission Colleges being "the personal influence which the teachers would be able to gain over their pupils." He then said: "Yet I have it on authority of teachers in four of the largest Indian Mission Colleges, that their time is so fully occupied with lecturing that they have neither time nor spirit for personal intercourse with their students. Five or six hours teaching per day, with several more hours for preparation, in an Indian climate, leave one exhausted, with neither time nor energy for **the most intense of all work, individual dealing with a person about his soul.**"

He concludes his paper with these words: "40 000 workers are needed, not less, if all India is to hear the gospel. Yet one almost shrinks from an appeal for workers. Why? Because they may be useless. **For missionary work is after all nothing else but soul-winning.** And you cannot become a soul-winner in India if **one has not been one at home.** A sense of duty, or of the great need, may **bring** a worker to India, but nothing can enable him to **live** a missionary **life** our here year by year, unless he has such a burning love for Christ **that compels him to sacrifice and live a life of soul-winning at home.**

What thoughts these extracts suggest in regard to the work of soul-winning! The first great requisite in a missionary is a burning desire to win souls for Christ. Going to a mission field will not necessarily make one a soul-winner. It is at home, before you enter the mission field, that the spirit of self-sacrifice and soul-winning must be received and exercised. The chief aims of the Student Movement, to train its members in the art of soul-winning, will be the practical measure of its strength and

success. The danger is that we relapse into traditional and mechanical methods, therefore continual, fervent, united and private prayer ought to be made for more love for souls, and continual, earnest, united and private efforts made in every Students' Union that our fellow students may be won for Christ.

The great distinction of the Divine life, whether in God, or in Christ, or in us, is **love seeking to save the lost**. Let this be the Christian life we cultivate; a love that finds its blessedness in saving people. This life can be cultivated in no other way than by close personal attachment to Jesus, and daily fellowship with Him as a Friend we love. It is in the inner chamber that this fellowship with the Father and the Son is to be maintained. It is especially in this that the Father who sees us in secret will reward us openly.

Prayer: O Lord! Forgive me for my lack of love for souls! Forgive me for spending so much attention and time on myself, my pleasures, my work, my success, my happiness, my prosperity, that I spend so little time to pray and work for the salvation of souls. Make me attentive in my quiet time with You, of my destiny here on earth: to tell others about You. Amen.