

FROM ORDINARY TO EXCEPTIONAL

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." John 1:40-42.

Whereas we know a lot about the other disciples of our Lord, we do not know much about Andrew. The New Testament has very little to say about him. It does not contain a book penned by him; it does not record any sermon preached by him, nor does it contain an account of a miracle performed by him. We are not told that Andrew ever preached a sermon. If he did, the Holy Spirit did not think it was worth recording.

It is frequently the lot of the man of average ability to be overshadowed by those who possess more brilliance, of which Andrew is an example. He was frequently referred to as Simon Peter's brother. Men who are known thus by their relationship to others are usually unobtrusive and not strikingly impressive. Andrew is a good specimen of the man of average gifts, who makes the best possible use of his talents.

We can tell much about a man if we know his friends. Among Andrew's close friends were John the Baptist, the man of stern, ascetic outlook on life, and John, the seer who became an apostle.

John the Baptist was the great voice and religious leader of his day. He was preaching near and baptizing in the Jordan River. Andrew and John went out to hear him and became his disciples. On the second day after the baptism of our Lord, Andrew and another disciple of John the Baptist, who is not named but whom it is easy to identify as John himself, were talking with the Forerunner when Christ passed by. Looking on the solemn figure passing by alone and apparently rapt in meditation, so meek and lowly and yet so full of dignity, John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" We can scarcely imagine the tone of voice in which he said it. What emotions must have stirred his soul as he thus bore testimony to the Person and work of Christ!

That was truly a red-letter day for these two disciples of John the Baptist. When they looked upon the long-expected Messiah, at the suggestion of the Baptist, their hearts leaped within them and they became eager and expectant. Moved by a fervid impulse, they instantly left John the Baptist and followed Christ. As they did so, there was not the slightest evidence of any jealousy or rancor of spirit on the part of the Baptist.

When Andrew and his colleague demonstrated their desire to get better acquainted with Christ, He turned suddenly upon them and said, "What seek ye?" In other words, He asked, Why are you coming after Me? What is it that you really want? Apparently He asked this searching question in order to test their motives and to draw them out. They, in turn, inquired as to where He dwelt. Their inquiry seemed to indicate that they had a desire for a private interview with the Master, in order that they might open their hearts unto Him. Understanding thoroughly that they were anxious to be in His presence and to obtain additional information from Him, Christ invited them to His place of abode. They gladly accepted His invitation, followed Him and enjoyed sweet fellowship with Him. As to what was said by either of them we have not been informed, but the result of that meeting was that both of them were convinced that Christ was the Messiah, and they became His ardent followers.

That Andrew was marked by manliness, courage, insight and strength is evidenced by the immediateness of the way in which at a critical moment he left John the Baptist and followed Christ. On that happy and meaningful day when Andrew had his wonderful experience of grace, he came into possession of an indescribable joy, an iridescent radiance and a measureless power. So he promptly became one of the very first to attach himself to Christ.

Have you ever spent a day or a night with Christ? If so, what a marvelous time it was! What a wonderful opportunity to listen to His words, to sense His spirit, to be inspired by His teaching, to be illumined by His instruction and to have life made far more meaningful as He talked with you!

It was by means of the sermon that John the Baptist preached that Andrew and John were converted. They were the fruits of the Baptist's ministry. They were the first to follow Christ. The gospel sermon was the first instrumentality used in making Christians. Gospel sermons still have great power.

It is our duty to make the sermon strong for the Lord Jesus Christ. How can we do that? We can do it by our prayers, by our faith and by our desires. The sermon must not be considered the product of the one man of the pulpit. It should never be allowed to go forth as a mere one-man power; it should be sent out to work for Christ filled with all the power of the assembled congregation.

In the construction of every sermon there ought to be the prayers and the faith of the people. They should pray outside of the study while the man of God is working inside, and in the delivery of the sermon the pulpit and the pew should unite their energy.

Failure to win converts today is due to the fact that the pew does not put its power behind the pulpit. The people do not put their faith and their enthusiasm into the truth declared by the gospel sermon. The responsibility rests upon the people. They can make a gospel sermon a soul-saving power if they will, and they also can kill the power of the very best sermon if they choose.

As soon as Andrew had experienced for himself the joy and blessedness of personal fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, he did not sit down in complacency but immediately became concerned that his brother, Simon Peter, enter into a similar experience and relationship. Andrew simply could not withhold the glorious news that he had learned and which had filled his soul with joy and thanksgiving. He had to tell someone that he had made a great discovery and that he longed to share it.

Andrew was no sooner a convert than he was a missionary. Just as soon as he came to know the Saviour he was greatly concerned that somebody else might be saved. Isn't that a wonderful example for us? He began his recruiting work as soon as he himself had enlisted in the Master's service. That is the best thing a young Christian can do. How like Christ it is to be concerned about the salvation of others!

Finding Christ to be the answer to his spiritual hopes and desires, Andrew went in search of his brother to inform him of his discovery and to invite him to share in it. In the light of his own experience with Christ, he was thoroughly convinced that his brother would be deeply interested in the discovery and would hail it with delight.

Andrew was a home missionary. He went straight home to get in his first work for his Saviour. He bent all of his efforts at first upon one man. He was not afraid to speak to his own brother about Christ. Having come to know Christ, his mind immediately turned to his own brother Simon. To himself he said, "Would that my dear brother Simon were a sharer of my joy!" It is ever thus with those who truly know the Lord. The love of Christ enlarges the heart in love to all: first, to members of the same family; then, to the circle of acquaintances; next, to those of the same country; and, finally, to all mankind.

Andrew hastened to him who had been his companion from youth, the son of his own parents and the sharer of his own toils. He could not rest until Simon also was partaker of his joy. He made it his business, just as soon as he had come to know the Lord, to go and find Peter, tell him his Christian experience and invite him to the Master. It often requires more courage, faith and love to speak to a brother about Christ than it does to witness to a total stranger. Genuinely saved people never want to withhold Christ from others,

and one of the best places to begin soul-winning is right at home among one's own relatives, even though the task may be difficult. Relationship most assuredly adds obligation to opportunity.

How noble it was in Andrew that he showed such a great interest in the salvation of his brother! They had spent years together. They had talked about many different things. So it was quite fitting that Andrew should talk with him about the most important subject under heaven. He did the greatest thing anyone can do for another. He went after his brother and, when he found him, he enthusiastically told him what he knew about Christ, expressing it in a few, short, crisp words, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Andrew brought his brother, of whom he was so proud, and introduced him to Christ. Andrew did not preach to Simon, nor did he enter into an argument with him, but he simply talked to him. He told him the good news in plain, unadorned and short sentences. His conversation was inspired further by brotherly love. His talk was characterized by much assurance. There was no doubt, no question mark, in Andrew's decisive and eager utterance. No halfway conviction would have brought Simon to Christ.

The majority of Christians came to Christ because somebody--father, mother, brother, sister, minister or friend--spoke to them and brought them to Him. The winning of souls to Christ is usually done by personal work, and it is something that any Christian can do. It is the Lord's plan for them to do so. Frequently I receive a letter asking me to take an interest in the spiritual welfare of someone who is near and dear to the writer. But with the request there usually comes this word: "But do not let him know that I have asked you." Such a request shows a strange unwillingness to do as Andrew did.

It was probably not easy for Andrew to get Simon to come to Christ, but somehow he brought him. If he had not done anything else in his life, he would deserve the gratitude of Christians through all the ages. He brought Simon to Christ and opened the way for the wonderful career of the man who has left such a deep mark upon the world. The greatest act of many a life is just this, to win one great soul to Christ.

Dr. J. B. Hawthorne was an orator sought by scores of churches and heard by multiplied thousands of auditors. On one occasion he went to assist a pastor and church in a two weeks' evangelistic campaign. At the end of it only a little unpromising boy had made a profession, and Hawthorne was a bit chagrined over the result. But that boy was A. T. Robertson, the one who became the greatest Greek and New Testament scholar of the twentieth century.

A similar thing took place in Scotland. A church went through a whole year with only one profession of faith, and, when that was reported at the annual convocation, they said: "None except Wee Bobbie, and he's so sma' he's no worth the countin'." But Wee Bobbie became Robert Moffatt, the flaming torch that illuminated the night of Africa and blazed the trail for the great and marvelous David Livingstone, his son-in-law.

Never despise the day when you win a child to Christ. Only God knows what that contribution may mean to the cause of Christ.

Andrew is an interesting example of a soul-winner. He was a very humble man. He kept himself in the background and never sought to focus attention upon himself. He was consistent in his conduct. His method was very simple. He certainly merits the emulation of every person who has come to know Christ. That he ever preached a sermon, we do not know, but we are sure that he did effective personal work. He evidently had a special gift for influencing others. This ability he used tactfully and wisely. He sought out his brother, and, without any argument whatsoever, he told him about Christ and "brought him to Jesus." Observing how he did personal work with his own family, we need to be reminded that one who is unwilling to attempt soul-winning at home will never be successful at it elsewhere.

To lead a soul to Christ is truly the greatest privilege that anyone can have. We never know how far-reaching may be the results of winning just one soul to Christ. It is a glorious accomplishment when anyone is brought to Christ, but how much more wonderful it is when in addition to the salvation of the soul there is also the salvation of the life for use in the service of the Lord. Thus it is when a young person is brought to Christ and is gloriously saved.

Andrew had one specialty. He was an expert in the gentle art of bringing others to Christ. The significant thing about him was that every time he was mentioned in the Bible he was introducing somebody to the Saviour. In every glimpse we have of him he was in the act of leading somebody else to Christ. If he never achieved anything else in life, there is this to place to his undying credit, he was the means of bringing such a great soul to Christ as Simon Peter proved himself to be. The rewards of Andrew would make an interesting study. Andrew was the acorn, Peter was the oak and three thousand converts at Pentecost were the great forest. Think of the work which Peter did. I believe Andrew will share in Peter's work because he led him to know Christ. It does not matter whether much or little is heard of disciples, so that they do their duty and commend themselves to the notice of the Lord in heaven.

Your supreme task as a Christian is to bring others to Christ. Have you ever brought a soul to Christ? If not, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. How will it look for you to go alone into heaven when you might have taken others with you? If you do not bring someone to Christ, there will be a missing note in your song, a missing joy in your experience, and a missing star in your crown. Bringing a person to Christ is the greatest service which you can ever render for him.

When did you talk to anybody about his spiritual welfare? When and where did you seek to introduce a person to Christ? Have you really tried to win anybody to Christ? You know a number of people who can truthfully say, "Not a single Christian ever asked me to become one." If you have introduced a person to Christ, you have started a succession of conversions which some day the Lord will reckon to your account when He distributes His rewards. The question is not going to be, "How many did you win to Christ?", but "How many did you really try to win?" We are not responsible for results, but we are for our testimony.