

THE WISDOM THAT WINS

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30.

This verse is one of the most familiar and famous in that marvelous book of Proverbs. The Revised Version presents it a little differently: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that is wise winneth souls." God says that it is a wise thing to win souls; that a person shows evidence of wisdom when he wins souls. It is also evident that wisdom is the condition for winning souls. Since winning souls is a wise business, a man must be wise if he is to win them. Wisdom is necessary to the work, and the accomplishment of the work is a demonstration of wisdom.

The wisdom that wins is that which is imparted by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who enables Christians to see the lost estate of precious souls. He opens our eyes and enables us to understand the condemnation of God which rests upon the believer. The infinite value of the soul is appreciated only through divine enlightenment.

Soul-winning is introducing people to Jesus Christ and getting them to receive Him as a personal Saviour. There is no greater privilege given to the child of God than this, and no greater joy is to be found in any activity than the joy experienced in leading a soul into the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ. It is a great enterprise to win souls, to bring them from darkness into light, and from death to life. This enterprise is quite worthwhile. It brings more satisfaction and delight to the soul than any other. Soul-winning is a worthy, delightful and satisfying enterprise.

Soul-winning is the alphabet of the Christian spirit. A new-born soul desires to win another to Christ. Andrew sought his brother, Simon, and brought him to Christ. Philip sought Nathaniel and introduced him to Christ. What the alphabet is to literature this soul-winning spirit is to Christianity. The alpha and omega of Christianity is soul-winning, and every letter between the first and last should be permeated by the spirit which seeks the lost.

Since soul-winning is a mark of wisdom, why is there so much sluggish apathy toward it? Why is there no burden, no heartache, no passion for souls? Is the church to be considered a graveyard with its members standing about like tombstones? Many church members have never led a soul to Christ in all their lives. The reason they have not done so is that they have never tried.

We need to see people in the light of God's Word. Not until we see the intrinsic worth of a soul will there be in our hearts the divine urgency to reach that individual for the Lord. The carpenter knows the value of his tools. The merchant knows the value of his products. God knows the value of those whom He has created.

Some Abyssinians once took captive a British subject by the name of Campbell. They carried him to the fortress of Magdala and consigned him to a dungeon without showing cause for the deed. It took six months for Great Britain to discover this. She then demanded the immediate release of the prisoner, but King Theodore haughtily refused. In less than ten days ten thousand

British soldiers were sailing down the coast to a point where they disembarked. They then marched seven hundred miles under a burning sun and reached the very dungeon where the prisoner was hidden. There they gave battle. The gates were torn down, the prisoner was lifted upon the shoulders of some of the soldiers and borne down the mountainside and thence to the ship. It cost the British government twenty-five million dollars to release one man. Such was the value the nation put upon the life and liberty of one British subject. But God puts a far greater price upon the life and liberty of a single soul. That is why He summoned all heaven to its redemption, and appointed His Son chief Captain and Leader to effect its liberty. When we get God's conception of the soul's worth no sacrifice will seem too great to make the effort to win it to Christ.

All of us are acquainted with honor rolls. The high schools post an honor roll of those students who make certain grades in their studies. The colleges have a dean's list which is often in the newspapers to the honor of those who have attained to certain scholastic standards.

In our factories we often see posted an honor roll, giving the names of those having excelled in certain endeavors. Sometimes it is skill in workmanship and sometimes it is recognition for having observed the rules of safety.

Even some churches have honor rolls and publish in their bulletins the names of those who have distinguished themselves by faithful church attendance and by regular weekly contributions to the work of the church.

God has His honor roll. The way to attain a place on His honor roll is pointed out in verses like these, "He that winneth souls is wise," and "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

There are three characteristics of those who earn a place on God's honor roll.

1. They engage in soul-winning.

This greatest of all tasks is committed unto every child of God, but it is shunned by many. Those who shun the task and refuse to obey will never be listed on God's honor roll.

The wise Christian recognizes the greatness of this task and makes soul-winning his main business. While the foolish person spends his life on secondary things, such as the making of money, the seeking of pleasure, and the striving for social and political prominence, the wise one spends some time in the pursuit of souls. The real purpose of his life is to bring people into a saving knowledge of Christ.

2. They continue to work at soul-winning.

Our text does not say, "He that winneth one soul and stops is wise." Nor does it say, "He that winneth a few souls and ceases is wise." The text says that the wise man is one who continues in soul-winning, the greatest of all work. It is pathetic to see people start out enthusiastically to win souls and then stop.

Soul-winning is not an easy task. When we endeavor to introduce people to Christ, we have the active opposition of Satan from the time that we begin. Also, we have to battle with the indifference of the people, most of whom care little about being saved and are very indifferent. We have to contend with spiritual blindness and ignorance. A soul-winner can get discouraged because of the hardships and rebuffs.

However, quitters never make God's honor roll. It will never be made by those who ran for a while and then ceased all efforts and sat on the sidelines. There are too many "has beens" in the Lord's army. There are so many who were once active but today are doing nothing. The honor roll is for those who continue on and on in this noble work. Neither is God's honor roll ever made by the self-satisfied.

3. They recognize the urgency of soul-winning.
It was a great day when Andrew received Christ and was saved. The day was made immortal when he went out and found his brother, Simon, and brought him to Christ. Who told Andrew to do that? Apparently no one, but he went. Having come to know Christ as Saviour, Andrew wanted his brother to know Him too. Recognizing the urgency, he did not delay.

If souls are to be won, they must be won before time runs out. All of your tears over the dead body of a loved one will not bring that one unto salvation. All of your prayers by a graveside will not bring about the salvation of that one who died without Christ. If we are to win souls, we must win them while there is life and opportunity. Life is so uncertain and death is so sure we must hasten to the task. We must do all we can to bring others to Christ. If we do not make God's honor roll, it is a matter for shame. We do not love Christ Jesus if we refuse to do the work which is nearest to His heart. We should begin this all-important work this very day.

What are some of the reasons why soul-winning is the personal task of every Christian?

1. That is the work Christ commanded us to do.
"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Any Christian who is not winning others to Christ is disobedient to Him. He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).
2. That was the business of life with Christ.
To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ. He had one purpose in coming to earth, namely, "to seek and to save that which was lost." The one thing for which He lived, suffered and died was to save the lost. Is that your purpose? Are you living for that? Is your one great ambition to win lost souls to Christ? If not, why call yourself a Christian? You have no right to call yourself a follower of Christ unless you are winning lost souls to Him.
3. That work produces the best results.
No other work is so beneficent. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the poor, and to instruct the ignorant are very helpful activities, but they are not to be compared with the honor, glory and beneficence of bringing lost people to Christ. There is no work like it.

4. That work brings the greatest rewards.

"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). Some want to shine down here, but that is not especially worth while. The brightest star in any earthly galaxy will soon fade, but any child of God can shine up there forever if he will pay the price by winning others to Christ.

Any child of God can do personal work or witness to some lost friend about Christ. People of all ages and culture may succeed in winning others to Christ. Little children have often been good soul-winners. A little girl received Christ as her Saviour and went home and asked her worldly mother if she might join the church, and the mother would not consent for her to do so. After much persistence on the part of the child the mother consented. Then the child invited her mother to trust Christ as her Saviour and she did.

Various kinds of people are effective soul-winners. Where one fails another will succeed. It took four men to bring one paralytic to Christ.

Several miles from Milton, Pennsylvania, when the ice was breaking up, a farmer got into one of his boats purposing to pull it out of the river. A floating mass of ice struck it, breaking it loose from the bank and carrying it and him out into the current. A neighbor, seeing the danger, mounted a horse and with all speed rode down to Milton. The people of the little town gathered all the ropes they could secure, went out on the bridge and suspended a line of dangling ropes from the bridge across the river. They could not tell at just what point the boat with the farmer would pass under, so they put a rope down every two or three feet clear across. By and by the farmer was seen, wet and cold, standing in the boat half full of water, drifting down the rapid current. When he saw the ropes dangling within reach, he seized the nearest one, was drawn up and rescued. Now one rope might not have answered the purpose. The pastor hands the rope of salvation from the pulpit, and sinners present do not seem to get near it, but if the church members who know Christ as their Saviour will hang out ropes sinners will certainly be saved.

God's glory is involved in this matter of winning souls. It is a mark of wisdom for us to do that which glorifies our Lord. His glory should be our chief concern. It should be the primary motive in all of our service. When a person believes on Christ and trusts Him for salvation, God is glorified.

Christian, win souls to Christ for your own sake. Perhaps you have been a Christian for years and never won a soul to Christ, nor been the instrument in God's hand of keeping a soul out of hell. You certainly will be terribly embarrassed when you stand before the Great Judge without having brought somebody to Christ. If you have never won anybody to Christ, the chief reason is that you have never made any effort to do so. There is no joy in the Christian life like that which comes from personally leading a soul into a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Word warns us not to "give place to the devil," and this is just exactly what any Christian does who refuses to make an effort to lead souls to Christ.

Win others to Christ for their sakes. If you love people, you will have compassion for them and try to introduce them to the Saviour. The very heart of Christianity is wrapped up in this. If you say that you believe that the Bible is true, that Christ is the Son of God, that there is a hell, that you are saved, that others will spend eternity in hell unless they trust Christ as their Saviour, and yet you do not do anything personally about them you prove that you are a hypocrite. If you are a child of God, and you love Christ and your relatives and friends, you cannot sit idly by and see them go to hell.

Win others to the Lord for His sake. That is the one thing in which He has always had a vital interest.

If there is one present who has not received Christ as your Saviour, may I close with this word of earnest entreaty? "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2). Will you not at this moment "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). There is life for you in Him. Receive Him now.