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CHAPTER 9: THE WORLD'S NEED

MATTHEW 21:23 – *"Son, go work today in my vineyard."*

LUKE 14:23 – *"And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."*

WE might have enumerated other texts, teaching the same truths. There are plenty of them, but the general tenor and bearing of the Word of God, especially of the New Testament, is more significant than even direct and isolated texts. It seems to me that no one can disinterestedly and dispassionately study the New Testament without arriving at the conclusion that it is a fundamental principle, underlying the whole, that His light and grace is expansive; that is, God has, in no case, given His light, His truth, and His grace to any individual soul, without holding that soul responsible for communicating that light and grace to others. Real Christianity is, in its very nature and essence, aggressive. We get this principle fully exhibited and illustrated in the Parables of Jesus Christ. If you will study them, you will find that He has not given us anything to be used merely for ourselves, but that we hold and possess every talent which He has committed to us for the good of others, and for the salvation of man. If I understand it, I say this is a fundamental principle of the New Testament.

How wonderfully this principle was exhibited in the lives of the Apostles and early Christians! How utterly careless they seemed to be of everything compared with this—this was the first thing with them everywhere! How Paul, at the very threshold, counted nothing else of any consequence, but willingly, cheerfully gave up every other consideration to live for this; and how he speaks of other Apostles and helpers in the Gospel who had been nigh unto death, and laid down their necks for the work's sake; and we know how he travelled, worked, prayed, wept, and suffered, bled and died, for this one end. And so with the early Christians, who were scattered through the persecutions, how they went everywhere preaching the Word; how earnest and zealous they were, even after the Apostolic age, we learn from ecclesiastical history—how they would push themselves in everywhere; how they made converts, and won real, self-denying, followers even in king's courts; how they would not be kept out, and could not be put down, and could not be hindered or silenced. "These Christians are everywhere," said one of their bitterest persecutors. Yes, they were instant in season and out of season; they won men and women on every hand, to the vexation and annoyance of



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those who hated them. Like their Master, they could not be hid; they could not be repressed; so aggressive, so constraining, was the spirit which inspired and urged them on.

It becomes a greater puzzle every day to me, coming in contact with individual souls, how people read their Bibles! They do not seem to understand what they read. Well might a Philip or an angel come to them and say, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Oh! friends, study your New Testament on this question, and you will be alarmed to find to what an awful extent you are your brother's keeper—to what an awful and alarming extent God holds you responsible for the salvation of those around you.

I want to glance, **FIRST**, at our call to work for God; and, **SECONDLY**, at two or three indispensable qualifications for successful labour.

And, first, as I have just said, we are called by the Word not only in these direct passages, but by the underlying principle running through it all, and laying upon us the obligation to save men. In fact, the world is cast upon us: we are the only people who **CAN** save the unconverted.

Oh! I wish I could get this thought thoroughly into your minds. It has been, perhaps, one of the most potent, with respect to any little service I have rendered in the vineyard, the thought, that Jesus Christ has nobody else to represent Him here but us Christians—His real people: nobody else to work for Him. These poor people of the world, who are in darkness and ignorance, have nobody else to show them the way of mercy. If we do not go to them with loving earnestness and determination to rescue them from the grasp of the great enemy; if we do not, by the power of the Holy Ghost, bind the strong man and take his goods, who is to do it? God has devolved it upon us. I say this is an alarming and awful consideration.

Secondly, we are called by the Spirit. The very first aspiration, as I said the other night, of a newly-born soul is after some other soul. The very first utterance, after the first burst of praise to God for deliverance from the bondage of sin and death, is a prayer gasped to the throne for some other soul still in darkness. And is not this the legitimate fruit of the Spirit? Is not this what we should expect? I take any one here, who has been truly saved, to record if the first gushings of his soul, after his own deliverance, was not for somebody else—father, mother, child, brother, sister, friend? Oh! yes, some of you could not go to sleep until you had written to a distant relative, and poured out your soul in anxious longings for his salvation; you could not take your necessary food until you had spoken or



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written to somebody in whose soul you were deeply interested. The Spirit began at once to urge you to seek for souls; and so it is frequently the last cry of the Spirit in the believer's soul before it leaves the body. You have sat beside many a dying saint, and what has been the last prayer? Has it been anything about self, money, family, circumstances? Oh! those things are now all left behind, and the last expressed anxiety has been for some prodigal soul outside the kingdom of God. When the light of eternity comes streaming upon the soul, and its eyes get wide open to the value of souls. It neither hears nor sees anything else! It goes out of time into eternity, praying as the Redeemer did, for the souls it is leaving behind. This is the first and last utterance of the Spirit in the believer's soul on earth; and oh! if Christians were only true to the promptings of this blessed Spirit, it would be the prevailing impulse, the first desire and effort all the way through life. It is not God's fault that it is not so. In personal dealing with souls there is no point comes out more frequently than this: nothing which those who have really been converted and have become backsliders in heart more frequently confess and bemoan than their unfaithfulness to the monitions of the Spirit with respect to other souls. In fact, backsliding begins here in thousands of instances. Satan gets people to yield to considerations of ease, propriety, being out of season, being injudicious, and so on; and they lose opportunities of dealing with souls, and so the Spirit is grieved and grieved. Oh! what numbers of people have confessed this to me.

A gentleman, in advanced life, said: 'When I was a young man, and in my first love, the zeal of the Lord's house so consumed me that I used to neglect my daily business, and could scarcely sleep at night; but, alas, that was many years ago.' 'Was it not better with you then than now?' I asked; and the tears came welling up into his eyes. Oh, yes! the Lord says of him, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown; Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of His increase." And, Alas! There are many such today. They have it all to do over again; they have to repent and do their first-works; they have to come back and get forgiven, and washed, and saved, if they are to go into the kingdom on high, all for want of systematically and resolutely obeying the urgings of the Holy Spirit towards their fellow-men.

Now, you have, some of you, been hearing, the last few Sundays, about grieving the Spirit, and about being filled with the Spirit; and some of you are puzzled as to how you ought to wait—whether you ought to go on with your lawful avocations and wait. I say: My friends, I could quite justify the position I took up last Sunday, but I will not stop, for I do not care about circumstantial; but mind, this is the great point—you must so wait, wherever it may be—so plead, and wrestle, and believe—SO



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THAT YOU GET IT. Then I care not whether it be in Jerusalem, in the Upper Room, or anywhere else—only, get it. Don't let us lose the substance in quibbling about the way. Wait in that way congenial to your present circumstances; but, oh! wait for it until you get it, for this is the life of your souls, and the life of many souls, perchance, besides yours. You want this spirit—the spirit that yearns over the souls of your fellow-men; to weep over them as you look at them in their sin, and folly and misery; the spirit that cannot be satisfied with your own enjoyments or with feeling that you are safe, or even that your children are safe; but that yearns over every living soul while there is one left unsaved, and can never rest satisfied until it is brought into the kingdom.

Such are the urgings of the Spirit; and if people would only be obedient to them, they would never lose these urgings. Why, what an anomaly it is! Does it look reasonable, or like God's dealings, that people should begin so strong, like the old man felt when he was young, and, instead of waxing stronger, and having this holy zeal and desire increased, get weaker and weaker, and less and less? Does it look like God's way of doing things? Oh, no! This eclipse is through grieving and quenching the Spirit.

Now, my friend, you are called by the Spirit to this work. Obey the call—DO IT. Never mind if it chokes you—do it. Say, "I had better die in obedience than live in disobedience." Oh! these everlasting likes and dislikes. 'I don't like to speak to that person,' 'I so dislike writing that letter.' Oh! you don't know what might be the consequences. Never mind the consequences—do it. God will stand between you and consequences; and, if He lets you suffer, never mind—then suffer; but obey the voice of the Spirit. There would have been thousands of souls saved if all those who have had these urgings had obeyed them. Pray, where do these urgings come from? Do they come from your own evil hearts? Then you are better than the Apostle. Separated from the Spirit that dwells in you, and disunited from Christ, your living Head, you are selfish, devilish. Then where do these urgings come from? Do they come from the Devil? Satan, then would indeed be divided against himself. Where do they come from? It is the Spirit of the living God that is urging you to come out and seek to save the lost. Will you obey these urgings? Will you give up your reasonings? Will you give up your likes and dislikes, and OBEY? If you will, then He will come to you more and more, till, like David, you will feel the interests of His kingdom to be more to you than meat or drink, than silver or gold. Nay, you will become like him who said, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."

But, further, we are called to this work by what He has done for us. And what is that? Oh! you say, I cannot tell. No, no; we shall have to get home first, and then we shall never be able to tell. We shall



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never be able to cast up that sum, not even for the gratification of the angels. That will remain an unexplored quantity for ever, what He has done for us!! We shall have to find out what it would have been to have been lost! and what it is to be saved in all its fullness and eternity, before we can tell what He has done for us!!

What has He done for us? Oh! if we had a tithe of the love to sinners that He had for us, of His forbearing patience, of His persevering effort, when He followed us day and night, reasoned and reasoned with us, wooed and allured us, what could we not do?

I remember reading, somewhere, the story of a nobleman who was (I think) a backslider. He was stopping at some country inn, and he went up into a room in which, over the mantelpiece there was a very good picture of the crucifixion by a good old master, and under it was written, "I suffered this for thee—what hast thou done for Me?" This question went home. It struck deep. He thought—Yes, what indeed? He went out into the stables to his horses, to try to get rid of the uncomfortable impression, but he could not forget it. A soft, pathetic voice seemed to follow him, 'I suffered this for thee, what hast thou done for Me!' At last it broke him down, and he went to his knees. He said: 'True, Lord, I have never done anything for Thee, but now I give myself and my all to Thee, to be used up in Thy service.'

And have you never heard that voice in your soul, as you have been kneeling at the Cross? Did you ever gaze upon that illustrious sufferer, and hear His voice, as you looked back into the paltry past? What hast thou done for Me?

Now, there have been, at the least, something like 350 people, who have come forward, so far, in these services, professing to give themselves afresh and fully to Jesus. I am sure, in the main, they have been sincere. They have come for the witness of the Spirit to their adoption, and for power for service. Now, friends, I want to know what this is to come to—what is to be the end of it?

"What are you going to do, brother?"

What are you going to do?"

And sister, too. Is it going to die out in sentiment? Is it going to evaporate in sighs and wishings, and end in 'I CANNOT?' God forbid! What are you GOING TO DO? What HAVE you been doing for Him



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the last week? Ask yourselves. You say, 'Well, I have read my Bible more.' Very good, so far as it goes. What have you read it for? 'Well,' you say, 'to get to know the Lord's will, and to get instruction and comfort.' Aye, exactly, but that is all for yourself, you see. 'I have prayed a great deal.' Very good. I wish everybody would pray. The Apostles say all men everywhere ought to pray. What for? 'I have been asking the Lord for great things.' Very good, praise the Lord; but those are for yourself, mainly. If you have been led out in agonizing supplication for souls, thank God for it, and go on, as the Apostle says, "watching thereunto, with all perseverance," "praying in the Holy Ghost;" but if it has been merely praying to get all you can for yourself, what profit is that to the Lord? But you say, 'I am bringing up my family.' Exactly; so are the worldly people around you, but what for? For God or for yourself? Oh! let us look at these things, friends. I am afraid a great deal of the religion is a mere transition of the selfishness of the human heart from the world to religion. I am afraid a great deal of the religion of this day ends in getting all you can and doing as little as you can—like some of your servants. You know the sort, who will do no more than they are forced—just get through, because they are hired. There is a great deal of that kind of service in these days, both towards man and towards God.

Now, friends, what have you been doing for Him—for the promotion of His blessed, glorious, saving purposes in the world? What have you been denying yourself for the sake of His kingdom? What labour have you gone through of mind, or brain, or heart? How many letters have you written? How many people have you spoken to? How many visits have you made? What self-denying labour have you been doing for Him who has done (as you say) so much for you? What have you been suffering for Him? Have you been trying, in some little measure, to fill up behind the measure of His sufferings "for His body's sake, the church?" Have you been carrying the sins and sorrows of a guilty world on your heart before God, and pleading with Him for His own name's sake, to pour out His Spirit upon the ungodly multitudes outside, and to quicken half-asleep professors inside? Have you been subjecting yourself to reproach and contempt—not only from the world, but from half-hearted professors and Pharisees, bearing the Cross, enduring the shame of unkind reproaches in living and striving to save them? Oh, what have you been doing, brother and sister?

Come, now, friends, I want a practical result. He suffered that for you. He is up yonder, interceding for you. Five bleeding wounds He always bears in the presence of His Father for you. If He were to forget you for a single moment, or cease His intercession, what would happen? What are you doing for Him? He has left you an example that you should follow His steps. What were they? They were blood-tracked; they were humiliated steps. They were steps scorned by the world. He was ignored,



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and traduced, and rejected of men. He had not where to lay His head. He carried in His body and in His soul the sorrows and sufferings of all our race. He was a man of sorrows—not His own. He had no reason to be sorrowful. He was the Father's own beloved, and He knew it, but He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. The griefs of this poor, lost, half-damned world He bore, and they were sometimes so intolerable that they squeezed the blood out of His veins. Have you been following in His footsteps, in any measure? He lived not for Himself. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and took upon Him the form of a servant. What are you doing? Oh! my friends, up, up, and be doing. Begin, if you have not begun—begin today. Ask Him to baptize you with His Spirit, and let you begin at once to follow Him in the regeneration of the Spirit. You are called by what He did for you!

Then, you are called by the wants of the world. I have said so much about this at other times that I will not say more now, only methinks it is a theme that is never exhausted, and never will be while there are any more sinners to save. Oh! the wants of the world! To me it is an overwhelming, a prodigious thought, that He shed His blood for every soul of man, and that, as He hung there, He saw, under all the vileness, and sin, and ruin of the Fall the human soul created originally in His own image, and capable of infinite and eternal development and progress. The soul to be rescued, washed, redeemed, saved, sanctified, and glorified—He saw this glorious jewel, and He gave HIMSELF for it. Look at these souls. There is not one of them so mean, or vile, or base, but can be rescued by the power of His Spirit, and by His living, glorious Gospel brought to bear upon them. The Saviour, quoting from the Prophets, says, "Ye are gods (and adds) the Scriptures cannot be broken." He had no such little, mean, insignificant estimate of the worth of human souls, as some people have nowadays, who consign whole generations to hell without any bowels of mercy or compassion. Oh! the Lord fill us with the pity of Jesus Christ, who, when He saw the multitudes, wept over them. Oh! friends, think of one such soul! What is your gold, or houses, or lands—what your respectability, what your reputation, what all the prizes of this world? We talk about it, but who realizes it—who, WHO?—the value of one precious, immortal soul saved, redeemed, sanctified? Oh, the wants of the world! They are dying, **THEY ARE DYING!!** When people come to me with their fastidious objections, I say, "My friend, all I know is—souls are dying, dying."

If your homes were being decimated by the cholera, you would not be very particular about the means you used to stay it, and if anybody came with objections to the roughness of your measures, you would say, 'the people are dying, they are dying,' and that would be the end of all argument. I say, they are dying, and they **ARE** to be saved. Satan is getting them: I want God to have them. Jesus



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Christ has bought them. He was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. They belong to Him, and He shall have everyone I can reach, and everyone I can inspire others to reach also.

The world is dying. Do you believe it? You are called by the wants of the world. Begin nearest home if you like, by all means, I have little faith in those people's ministrations who go abroad after others, while their own are perishing at their firesides. Begin at home, but do not end there. "Oh! yes," people say, "begin at home," but they end there; you never hear of them anywhere else, and it comes to very little what they do at home, after all. God has ordained that the two shall go together. Get them saved by all means, but get somebody else saved as well. Set yourself to work for God. Go to Him to ask Him how to do it. Go to Him for the equipment of power and then begin. Never mind how you tremble. I dare say your trembling will do more good than if you were ever so brave. Never mind the tears. I wish Christians would weep the Gospel into people; it would often go deeper than it does. Never mind if you do stammer. They will believe you when it comes from the heart. They will say, 'He talked to me quite natural,' as a man said, some time ago—wondering that he should be talked to about religion in a natural way; but mind, no mock feeling, for they will detect it in a minute. Go to the closet until you get filled with the Spirit, and then go and let it out upon them.

Finney says, "I went and let my heart out on the people." Get your heart full of the living water and then open the gates and let it flow out. Look them in the face and take hold of them lovingly by the hand and say, 'My friend, you are dying, you are going to everlasting death. If nobody has ever told you till now—I have come to tell you. My friend, you have a precious soul. Is it saved?' They can understand that! not beginning in a roundabout way, but talking to them straight: 'Do you ever think about your precious soul? Is it saved? Are your sins pardoned? Are you ready to die?' Your rich neighbours and your servant-girls and your stable-men alike, can understand that.

A lady said to my daughter, 'I have begun talking to people about their souls in quite a different way to what I used. I begin asking them if they do not know they are sinners and if ready to die, and it produces quite a different effect.' For one reason she has her own heart full of the Love and Spirit of God, and that burns her words in. Begin in that way and see what God will do through you, for, of course, I only recognize you as the instrumentality which He has chosen, and those who reflect upon the instrumentality reflect upon His wisdom. You go and put your hand to the plough and He will give you strength to push it along.



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The Lord help you to go home thinking about the wants of the world, and next Sabbath we will consider the qualifications for labour.

From a series of lectures given by Catherine Booth in 1880.