

A Word To You Who Would Be Useful

Samuel Logan Brengle:

Does the devil ever tempt you to feel that you are of no use and can do nothing? Every genuine Christian wants to be useful, fruit-bearing, and a soul-winner. This desire is characteristic of the new nature, received at conversion. When Paul was converted, he wanted to go back to Jerusalem and tell all his old friends about it, that they, too, might be saved. When you were converted your heart went out to God for the salvation of your friends, and you tried to so live your life before them that they would be brought to Jesus, and it is largely this desire for usefulness and the salvation of others that has led you to become a soldier or an officer. But now that you are fairly in the Army and in its work, do you ever feel that you are useless; that you can do nothing; that your words are powerless to lead people to Jesus?

I find a great many such people, and maybe you are such an one, and if so, it is for you I write. I have often felt as you do myself; and therefore can sympathize with you, and maybe can write something to encourage you. And first I would say, do what you can. 'Angels can do no more.' Your talents may not be great, but use what talents you have and God will surely increase them. It is a law of God, that what is used shall be increased. Everything that has life begins small. The largest oak was once enfolded in an acorn. The most skillful musician in the world at one time did not know one note from another. The most learned man now living once did not know A from Z. Moses was once a helpless babe in a floating ark of bulrushes. The General was once a young convert. But they grew and increased. If there is spiritual life in you, you will grow, if you will do with your might what your hands find to do.

Cultivate your talents. There are many thousands of bandsmen in the Army today who at one time could not play an instrument, and who did not know a cornet from a concertina. But they began to practice. It was slow work at first. But they kept at it. Probably, the first day they could not see that they had made any progress at all, nor the second day; but in a week or a month they could see. They began, kept patiently at it, and at last succeeded. That is the way to cultivate any talent we have. That is the way to become mighty in prayer, to become acquainted with the Bible, to learn to speak or sing or fish for souls. Begin and keep at it.

Do not get discouraged because you cannot do as well as someone else. God has a work for you to do, and no one else can do it; not even the General can do it. God meant that work for you and you for that work, and if you do not do it, it will never be done. The thing then for you to do is to go to God and thank Him for what gifts you have and for giving you some work to do, and then ask Him for wisdom to do it bravely, faithfully and wisely, and He will surely be with you.

Do not sit down in the discouragement of unbelief and think because you have not the talents of some gifted person you know that therefore you can do nothing. That is wicked. It is dishonoring to God, pleasing to the devil, and will surely result in a great loss to your soul, if not in the final loss of your soul. Jesus tells us that the man with five talents put his money out at use and gained five talents more, and likewise the man with two talents. But He says the man with one talent went and wrapped it in a napkin and hid it, and so lost it, and was himself cast out as a slothful and wicked servant into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Secondly, encourage your poor, trembling heart with the promises and examples, in the Bible. Here is a promise for you, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. xv. 58). The devil tells you that your labour is vain, but God says it is not. Believe God, my brother, and go on with your work. Again the Lord says, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Gal. vi. 7). David tried on Saul's armor, but he could not fight in that, so he laid it aside and went out against the giant in the name of the Lord, with his sling and a smooth stone out of the brook and slew him.

Saul's armor, wrought at the forge, may be like the education and culture gained in the theological schools and universities, while the sling and the stone are like the wisdom given by the Holy Ghost to simple, humble, faithful hearts in mills and shops and kitchens, and the lowly places of secret prayer and daily toil. Go, my brother, my sister, in the name of the Lord, with the wisdom He gives you, and you shall slay giants.

Paul tells us 'that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence' (1 Cor. ii 26-29).

If you were learned and wise and mighty, and did great things, people would give all the glory to your learning and wisdom; but if you are little and foolish, then they have to give the glory to God. Go on, my brother, and do what you can.

When the Spirit of God came on Shamgar he slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad, and Samson slew one thousand with the jaw-bone of an ass, and Gideon, with three hundred men armed only with earthen pitchers and torches routed the hosts of Midian. Hallelujah!

When Jesus blessed the five little loaves and the two small fishes of the lad, they fed about five thousand men. And so if you will pray and believe, He will bless your words and works to multitudes. Remember, it is not what you say or do alone, but it is His blessing added to what you say and do that accomplishes the work, and He will surely add His blessing if you will trust and obey.

I read of an educated minister who had a skeptical lawyer in his congregation, whom he wanted very much to see converted and united with the church, and for whose benefit he prepared some very learned and labored sermons. One day, to the minister's delight, the lawyer came to his study with the glad news that he was converted, and wished to join the church. After some conversation, the pastor rather blushing inquired, 'May I ask you which one of my sermons it was led you to Christ?

Then the lawyer, with some little confusion, replied, 'Well, to tell you the truth, pastor, it was not one of your sermons that led me to Christ at all. It was this way. A few Sundays ago, as we were leaving the church, the steps were very slippery, and old colored Auntie Blank was trying to descend them. She was crippled and feeble and in danger of falling, when I took hold of her arm and assisted her to the sidewalk. She looked up into my eyes and thanked me, and, with a bright smile on her old black face, asked, "Do you love my Jesus?" and that led me to Christ.' Ah, that was the smooth stone, that killed the giant when Saul's armor and sword had failed!

Be a man of much secret prayer, my brother. Acquaint yourself with God; take time to listen to His voice; read your Bible; love it, pray over it; read good books; familiarize yourself with the 'Orders and Regulations for Soldiers,' by the General, and you will get your mind stored with truths that will be to you as David's smooth stones, and God will surely use you and make you a blessing.

I remember well the first time I attempted to speak from a text. I utterly failed, and was filled with confusion. But by seeking His face the Lord has long since given me victory, and I rejoice unutterably at the privilege of speaking for Him, and by living a life of constant prayer down at Jesus' feet, and by a determined exercise of faith, I seldom open my mouth to speak for Him without feeling a deep conviction in my soul that my words are accompanied by the Holy Ghost and are hitting the mark and reaching hearts. And this may be your experience, my brother, my sister, if you utterly forsake sin, consecrate yourself fully to the interests of Jesus, steadfastly believe and continue in prayer. God said to Moses, 'I will be with thy mouth' (Exod. iv. 12), and He will say the same to you if you wait on Him. He is no respecter of persons.