

WORDS TO WINNERS OF SOULS

by Horatius Bonar

Horatius Bonar's searching challenge to Christians examining spiritual shortcomings including neglect of Scripture, failure to guard against temptation, and the danger of refined hypocrisy in the believer's life.

3 Chapters

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Words to Winners of Souls

Part 1

Words to Winners of Souls by Horatius Bonar Forward by Roger Greenway Published by Baker Bookhouse Company Forward The pastor of a large church in California on a freeway was a visiting missionary from overseas. New housing developments stretch for miles along both sides of the road. I wonder how many unsaved people live in those houses, remarked the missionary.

I'd sure like to get in there and find out. That's where you and I differ, replied the pastor. If someone told me there were Christians in those houses who needed pastoral attention, I'd be glad to help.

But the thought of going in there to reach unchurched people leaves me cold. Because this attitude of indifference toward the lost is such a universal problem in the church, the reappearance of Horatius Bonar's book, Words to Winners of Souls, is most heartily welcome. The apathy of Christians toward the lost is the greatest hindrance to world evangelization, and the problem is by no means restricted to one geographical area of the world.

In Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the same indifference is found, and it explains why the world is still lost, even 2,000 years after Christ gave the Great Commission. In religious churches today, we have all kinds of evangelistic schemes, missionary programs, and fundraising devices. But we aren't accomplishing half of what we should.

What we need are men and women with a Christlike passion for the salvation of souls. The church has more than enough scholars, management experts, fundraisers, and media-attractive personalities. What it needs is people aglow with the soul-winning power and presence of God.

It will interest readers to know that Bonar was a Presbyterian, a denominational leader in his day. His theology was historic Calvinism, and he believed firmly in the sovereignty of God over all things. Bonar defines the object of Christian ministry as converting sinners and edifying saints.

He insists that the pastor's aim in every sermon and in every visit must be to save the lost and guide the saved. He places the primary responsibility for evangelism with the individual Christian, particularly the pastors. If the leaders are people endowed with converting power, whose source of strength is the life of holiness and communion with God, the church will grow and sinners will be saved.

But if the main focus of their ministry is in some other direction, neither orthodoxy, nor education, nor eloquence, nor zeal can serve as a substitute and cause the church to be evangelistic. Books on evangelism and soul-winning have never been more numerous than today, but few come close to the power and quality of Bonar's Words to Winners of Souls. Bonar is different because he brings us to our knees.

He shows us where the heart of our failure lies, and he points out the way to recovery. At a time when even missions and evangelism are capitulating to secularizing pressures, Christian leaders need to hear Horatius Bonar again and reflect deeply on his message. As a former missionary and

pastor who has served the church in southern Asia, in several parts of Latin America, and now in North America, I am keenly aware of church leaders' overwhelming preoccupation with the internal affairs of the church.

If only every pastor, missionary, and lay leader in the church could hear Horatius Bonar's timely reminder, he that saved our souls taught us to weep over the unsaved. Roger S. Greenway
PREFACE It is not difficult to write a preface to this classic treasure of the Christian ministry written by a Scottish Presbyterian divine who was born in Edinburgh on December 19, 1808, and died there on July 31, 1889. He belongs to a previous generation, but his little manual is timeless, for it fits into the needs of our day almost as accurately as it did into the needs of the parish of Kelso in 1866, and later in Edinburgh.

Horatius Bonar was first of all a winner of souls, although he was also a great preacher and a writer of some of our best hymns. He became moderator of the General Assembly of his church. When we read his manual on how to win men for Christ, we are reminded page after page of his three best hymns, although he was the author of many.

He could say himself, I heard the voice of Jesus say, and therefore he could write the hymn beginning with those words. How many have been led to Christ by this invitation to accept Him as their Savior, and how many Christians have rededicated themselves to their Lord and Master, and have recalled the day when they first loved Him, when they have sung at the Holy Communion, Hear, O my Lord, I see thee face to face. Not only are his counsels to the winners of souls spiritual, divine, and searching, but the keynote of it all is that of urgency, as he himself expressed it in his third great hymn, Go, labor on, spend, and be spent.

The third stanza of that hymn ought to be written as a motto on the desk of every pastor. Go, labor on while it is day, The work's dark night is hastening on, Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away, It is not thus that souls are won. This is a book for winners of souls, not for loiterers on the highway, or for slothful servants of our Master.

It is a heart-searching book, but also one that gives new courage to continue the daily task. I recall as a boy one little book that used to lie on my father's desk, that is, sixty years ago, in his pastoral study in Michigan. It was his constant companion, and was marked almost on every page.

This little volume, bound in leather with gilt edges, had on the cover, Words to Winners of Souls Samuel M. Zwemmer, D.D., 1867-1952 March 3, 1950, New York City Contents Forward Preface Chapter 1. Importance of a Living Ministry Chapter 2. The Minister's True Life and Walk Chapter 3. Past Defects Chapter 4. Ministerial Confession Chapter 5. Revival in the Ministry Tis not for man to trifle. Life is brief, and sin is here. Our age is but the falling of a leaf, a dropping tear.

We have no time to sport away the hours. All must be earnest in a world like ours. Not many lives, but only one, have we.

One, only one. How sacred should that one life ever be, that narrow span? Day after day filled up with blessed toil, hour after hour still bringing in new spoil. Chapter 1. Importance of a Living Ministry How much more would a few good and fervent men effect in the ministry than a multitude of lukewarm ones, said O. Columpaddingus, the Swiss Reformer, a man who had been taught by experience, and who has recorded that experience for the benefit of other churches and other

days? The mere multiplying of men calling themselves ministers of Christ will avail little.

They may be but cumberers of the ground. They may be like Achan troubling the camp, or perhaps Jonah raising the tempest. Even when sound in the faith, through unbelief, lukewarmness, and slothful formality, they may do irreparable injury to the cause of Christ, freezing and withering up all spiritual life around them.

The lukewarm ministry of one who is theoretically orthodox is often more extensively and fatally ruinous to souls than that of one grossly inconsistent or flagrantly heretical. What man on earth is so pernicious a drone as an idle minister, said Cecil? And Fletcher remarked well that lukewarm pastors made careless Christians. Can the multiplication of such ministers, to whatever amount, be counted a blessing to a people? When the Church of Christ, in all her denominations, returns to primitive example, and walking in apostolical footsteps, seeks to be conformed more closely to inspired models, allowing nothing that pertains to worth to come between her and her living head, then she will give more careful heed to see that the men to whom she entrusts the care of souls, however learned and able, should be yet more distinguished by their spirituality, zeal, faith, and love.

In comparing Baxter and Orton, the biographer of the former remarks that Baxter would have set the world on fire while Orton was lighting a match. How true! Yet not true alone of Baxter or of Orton. These two individuals are representatives of two classes in the Church of Christ in every age and of every denomination.

The latter class are far the more numerous, the Ortons you may count by hundreds, the Baxters by tens. Yet who would not prefer a solitary specimen of the one to a thousand of the other? Baxter's burning sincerity. When he spoke of weighty soul concerns, says one of his contemporaries of Baxter, you might find his very spirit drenched therein.

No wonder that he was blessed with such amazing success. Men felt that in listening to him they were in contact with one who was dealing with realities of infinite moment. This is one of the secrets of ministerial strength and ministerial success.

And who can say how much of the overflowing infidelity of the present day is owing not only to the lack of spiritual instructors, not merely to the existence of grossly unfaithful and inconsistent ones, but to the coldness of many who are reputed, sound, and faithful. Men cannot but feel that if religion is worth anything, it is worth everything. That if it calls for any measure of zeal and warmth, it will justify the utmost degrees of these.

And that there is no consistent medium between reckless atheism and the intensest warmth of religious zeal. Men may dislike, detest, scoff at, persecute the latter, yet their consciences are all the while silently reminding them that if there be a God and a Savior, a heaven and a hell, anything short of such life and love is hypocrisy, dishonesty, perjury. And thus the lesson they learn from the lifeless discourses of the class we are alluding to is that since these men do not believe the doctrines they are preaching, there is no need of their hearers believing them.

If ministers only believe them because they make their living by them, why should those who make nothing by them scruple about denying them? Rash preaching, said Roland Hill, disgusts. Timid preaching leaves poor souls fast asleep. Bold preaching is the only preaching that is owned of

God.

It is not merely unsoundness in faith, nor negligence in duty, nor open inconsistency of life that mars the ministerial work and ruin souls. A man may be free from all scandal, either in creed or conduct, and yet may be a most grievous obstruction in the way of all spiritual good to his people. He may be a dry and empty cistern, notwithstanding his orthodoxy.

He may be freezing or blasting life at the very time he is speaking of the way of life. He may be repelling men from the cross even when he is in words proclaiming it. He may be standing between his flock and the blessing even when he is in outward form lifting up his hand to bless them.

The same words that from warm lips would drop as the rain or distill as the dew fall from his lips as the snow or hail, chilling all spiritual warmth and blighting all spiritual life. How many souls have been lost for want of earnestness, want of solemnity, want of love in the preacher even when the words uttered were precious and true? Our one object, to win souls. We take for granted that the object of the Christian ministry is to convert sinners and to edify the body of Christ.

No faithful minister can possibly rest short of this. Applause, fame, popularity, honor, wealth, all these are vain. If souls are not won, if saints are not matured, our ministry itself is vain.

The question, therefore, which each of us has to answer to his own conscience is, has it been the end of my ministry? Has it been the desire of my heart to save the lost and guide the saved? Is this my aim in every sermon I preach, in every visit I pay? Is it under the influence of this feeling that I continually live and walk and speak? Is it for this I pray and toil and fast and weep? Is it for this I spend and am spent, counting it next to the salvation of my own soul, my chiefest joy, to be the instrument of saving others? Is it for this that I exist, to accomplish this would I gladly die? Have I seen the pleasure of the Lord prospering in my hand? Have I seen souls converted under my ministry? Have God's people found refreshment from my lips and gone upon their way rejoicing? Or have I seen no fruit of my labors and yet content to remain unblessed? Am I satisfied to preach and yet not know of one saving impression made, one sinner awakened? Nothing short of positive success can satisfy a true minister of Christ. His plans may proceed smoothly and His external machinery may work steadily, but without actual fruit in the saving of souls He counts all these as nothing. His feeling is, My little children, of whom I travail and birth again until Christ be formed in you.

Galatians 4.19 And it is this feeling which makes Him successful. Ministers, said Owen, are seldom honored with success unless they are continually aiming at the conversion of sinners. The resolution that in the strength and with the blessing of God He will never rest without success will ensure it.

It is the man who has made up his mind to confront every difficulty, who has counted the cost and, fixing his eye upon the prize, has determined to fight his way to it. It is such a man that conquers. The dull apathy of other days is gone.

Satan has taken the field actively and it is best to meet him front to front. Besides, men's consciences are really on edge. God seems extensively striving with them as before the flood.

A breath of the Divine Spirit has passed over the earth and hence the momentous character of the time as well as the necessity for improving it so long as it lasts. The one true goal or resting place where doubt and weariness, the stings of a pricking conscience and the longings of an unsatisfied soul would all be quieted is Christ Himself. Not the church, but Christ.

Not doctrine, but Christ. Not forms, but Christ. Not ceremonies, but Christ.

Christ, the God-man, giving His life for ours, sealing the everlasting covenant and making peace for us through the blood of His cross. Christ, the Divine storehouse of all light and truth, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Colossians 2, 3. Christ, the infinite vessel, filled with the Holy Spirit, the Enlightener, the Teacher, the Quickener, the Comforter, so that of His fullness have all we received and grace for grace. John 1, 16.

This alone is the vexed soul's refuge, its rock to build on, its home to abide in till the great tempter be bound and every conflict ended in victory. Meet opinion with the truth. Let us then meet this earnestness, which is now the boast but may ere long be the bane of the age with that which alone can bring down its feverish pulse and soothe it into blessed calm, the gospel of the grace of God.

All other things are but opiates, drugs, quackeries. This is the divine medicine. This is the soul, the speedy, the eternal cure.

It is not by opinion that we are to meet opinion. It is the truth of God that we are to wield and applying the edge of the sword of the Spirit to the theories of man, which he proudly calls his opinions, make him feel what a web of sophistry and folly he has been weaving for his own entanglement and ruin. It is not opinions that man needs.

It is truth. It is not theology. It is God.

It is not religion. It is Christ. It is not literature and science but the knowledge of the free love of God and the gift of His only begotten Son.

I know not, says Richard Baxter, what others think, but for my own part I am ashamed of my stupidity and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others' souls as one that looks for the great day of the Lord and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts and words and that such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly and how I can let men alone in their sins and that I do not go to them and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent however they may take it and whatever pain and trouble it should cost me. I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent.

It accuseth me not so much for want of ornaments and elegancy nor for letting fall an unhandsome word but it asketh me how couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, sleepy manner? Dost thou believe what thou sayest? Art thou in earnest or in jest? How canst thou tell people that sin is such a thing and that so much misery is upon them and before them and be no more affected with it? Shouldst thou not weep over such a people and should not thy tears interrupt thy words? Shouldst thou not cry aloud and show them their transgressions and entreat and beseech them as for life and death? Truly this is the peel that conscience doth ring in my ears and yet my drowsy soul will not be awakened. O what a thing is an insensible hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and

hardheartedness ourselves or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it? O do that on our souls which thou wouldst use us to do on the souls of others. Chapter 2 The Minister's True Life and Walk The true minister must be a true Christian.

He must be called by God before he can call others to God. The Apostle Paul thus states the matter, God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5.18 They were first reconciled and then they had given to them the ministry of reconciliation.

Are we ministers reconciled? It is but reasonable that a man who is to act as a spiritual guide to others should himself know the way of salvation. It has been frequently said that the way to heaven is blocked up with dead professors. But is it not true also that the melancholy obstruction is not composed of members of churches only? Let us take heed unto ourselves.

As the minister's life is in more than one respect the life of a ministrate, let us speak a few words on ministerial holy living. Let us seek the Lord early. If my heart be early seasoned with his presence, it will savor of him all day after.

Let us see God before man every day. I ought to pray before seeing anyone. Often when I sleep long or meet with others early and then have family prayer and breakfast and four noon callers, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer.

This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ rose before day and went into a solitary place.

Family prayer loses much of power and sweetness and I can do no good to those who come to seek for me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then, when secret prayer comes, the soul is often out of tune.

I feel it far better to begin with God, to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another. It is best to have at least one hour alone with God before engaging in anything else. At the same time, I must be careful not to reckon communion with God by minutes or hours or by solitude.

McShane Hear this true servant of Christ exhorting a beloved brother. Take heed to thyself. Your own soul is your first and greatest care.

You know a sound body alone can work with power, much more a healthy soul. Keep a clear conscience through the blood of the Lamb. Keep a close communion with God.

Study likeness to him in all things. Read the Bible for your own growth first, then for your people. With him, says his biographer, the commencement of all labor invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul.

The forerunner of each day's visitations was a calm season of private devotion during morning hours. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness, I believe of his tears as well as of his cries. The pleasant sound of psalms often issued from his room at an early hour then followed the reading of the word for his own sanctification, and few have so fully realized the blessing of the first psalm.

Would that it were so with us all. Devotion, said Bishop Hall, is the life of religion, the very soul of piety, the highest employment of grace. It is much to be feared that we are weak in the pulpit because we are weak in the closet.

Working with God. To restore a commonplace truth, writes Mr. Coleridge, to its first uncommon luster, you need only translate it into action. Walking with God is a very commonplace truth.

Translate this truth into action, how lustrous it becomes, the phrase, how hackneyed, the thing, how rare. It is such a walk, not an abstract ideal, but a personality, a life, which the reader is invited to contemplate. Oh, that we would only set ourselves in right earnest to this rare work of translation.

It is said of the energetic, pious and successful John Berridge that communion with God was what he enforced in the latter stages of his ministry. It was indeed his own meat and drink and the banquet from which he never appeared to rise. This shows us the source of his great strength.

If we were always sitting at this banquet, then it might be recorded of us ere long, as of him, he was in the first year visited by about a thousand persons under serious impression. Study the speakers, not the sermon. To the men, even more than to their doctrine, we would point the eye of the inquirer who asks, whence came their success? Why may not the same success be ours? We may take the sermons of Whitefield or Berridge or Edwards for our study or our pattern, but it is the individuals themselves that we must mainly set before us.

It is with the spirit of the men, more than of their works, that we are to be imbued, if we are emulous of a ministry as powerful, as victorious as theirs. They were spiritual men and walked with God. It is living fellowship with the living Savior which transforming us into his image fits us for being able and successful ministers of the gospel.

Without this, nothing else will avail. Neither orthodoxy, nor learning, nor eloquence, nor power of argument, nor zeal, nor fervor, will accomplish ought without this. It is this that gives power to our words and persuasiveness to our arguments, making them either as the balm of Gilead to the wounded spirit or as sharp arrows of the mighty to the conscience of the stout-hearted rebel.

From them that walk with him in holy, happy intercourse, a virtue seems to go forth, a blessed fragrance seems to compass them whithersoever they go. Nearness to him, intimacy with him, assimilation to his character, these are the elements of a ministry of power. When we can tell our people, we beheld his glory, and therefore we speak of it.

It is not from report we speak, but we have seen the king and his beauty, how lofty the position we occupy. Our power in drawing men to Christ springs chiefly from the fullness of our personal joy in him and the nearness of our personal communion with him. The countenance that reflects most of Christ and shines most with his love and grace is most fitted to attract the gaze of a careless, giddy world and win restless souls from the fascinations of creature love and creature beauty.

A ministry of power must be the fruit of a holy, peaceful, loving intimacy with the Lord. Faithfulness essential to success. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips.

He walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. Malachi 2.6 Let us observe the connection here declared to subsist between faithfulness and success in the work of

the ministry, between a godly life and the turning away many from iniquity. The end for which we first took office as we declared at ordination was the saving of souls.

The end for which we still live and labor is the same. The means to this end are a holy life and a faithful fulfillment of our ministry. The connection between these two things is close and sure.

We are entitled to calculate upon it. We are called upon to pray and labor with a confident expectation of its being realized, and where it is not, to examine ourselves with all diligence, lest the cause of the failure be found in ourselves, in our want of faith, love, prayer, zeal, and warmth, spirituality, and holiness of life. For it is by these that the Holy Spirit is grieved away.

Success is attainable, success is desirable, success is promised by God, and nothing on earth can be more bitter to the soul of a faithful minister than the want of it. To walk with God and to be faithful to our trust is declared to be the certain way of attaining it. Oh, how much depends on the holiness of our life, the consistency of our character, the heavenliness of our walk and conversation.

Our position is such that we cannot remain neutral. Our life cannot be one of harmless obscurity. We must either repel or attract, save or ruin souls.

How loud then the call, how strong the motive to spirituality of soul and circumspectness of life. How solemn the warning against worldly mindedness and vanity, against levity and frivolity, against negligence, sloth, and cold formality. Of all men, a minister of Christ is especially called to walk with God.

Everything depends on this, his own peace and joy, his own future reward at the coming of the Lord. But especially does God point to this as the true and sure way of securing the blessing. This is the grand secret of ministerial success.

One who walks with God reflects the light of his countenance upon a benighted world. And the closer he walks, the more of this light does he reflect. One who walks with God carries in his very air and countenance a sweet serenity and holy joy that diffuses tranquility around.

One who walks with God receives and imparts life whithersoever he goes. As it is written, out of him shall flow rivers of living water. John 7.38 He is not merely the world's light, but the world's fountain, dispensing the water of life on every side and making the barren waste of blossom as the rose.

He waters the world's wilderness as he moves along his peaceful course. His life is blessed. His example is blessed.

His intercourse is blessed. His words are blessed. His ministry is blessed.

Souls are saved. Sinners are converted. And many are turned from their iniquity.

Chapter 3 Past Defects O my God, I am ashamed and blushed to lift up my face to thee, my God. O our God, what shall we say after this? Ezra 9.6-10 To deliver sermons on each returning Lord's Day, to administer the Lord's Supper stately, to pay an occasional visit to those who request it, to attend religious meetings. This, we fear, sums up the ministerial life of multitudes who are, by profession, overseers of the flock of Christ.

An incumbency of thirty, forty, or fifty years often yields no more than this. So many sermons, so many baptisms, so many sacraments, so many visits, so many meetings of various kinds. These are all the pastoral annals, the parish records, the all of a lifetime's ministry to many.

Of souls that have been saved, such a record could make no mention. Multitudes have perished under such a ministry. Only the judgment will disclose whether so much as one has been saved.

There might be learning, but there was no tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary. There might be wisdom, but it certainly was not the wisdom that winneth souls. There might even be the sound of the gospel, but it seemed to contain no glad tidings at all.

It was not sounded forth from warm lips into startled ears as the message of eternal life, the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Men lived, and it was never asked of them by their minister whether they were born again. Men sickened, sent to the minister, and received a prayer upon their deathbeds as their passport into heaven.

Men died and were buried where all their fathers had been laid. There was a prayer at their funeral, and decent respects to their remains, but their souls went up to the judgment seat unthought of, uncared for. No man, not even the minister who had vowed to watch for them, having said to them, Are you ready? or warned them to flee from the wrath to come.

Is not this description too true of many a district, and many a minister? We do not speak in anger. We do not speak in scorn. We ask the question solemnly and earnestly.

It needs an answer. If ever there was a time when there should be great searching of heart and frank acknowledgment of unfaithfulness, it is now when God is visiting us, visiting us both in judgment and mercy. We speak in brotherly kindness.

Surely the answer should not be of wrath and bitterness. And if this description be true, what sin must there be in ministers and people? How great must be the spiritual desolation that prevails? Surely there is something in such a case grievously wrong, something which calls for solemn self-examination in every minister, something which requires deep repentance, the tragedy of a barren ministry. Fields plowed and sown, yet yielding no fruit.

Machinery constantly in motion, yet all without one particle of produce. Nets cast into the sea and spread wide, yet no fishes enclosed. All this for years, for a lifetime.

How strange! Yet it is true. There is neither fancy nor exaggeration in the matter. Question some ministers and what other account can they give? They can tell you of sermons preached, but of sermons blessed they can say nothing.

They can speak of discourses that were admired and praised, but of discourses that have been made effectual by the Holy Spirit they cannot speak. They can tell you how many have been baptized, how many communicants admitted, but of souls awakened, converted, ripening in grace they can give no account. They can enumerate the sacraments they have dispensed, but as to whether any of them have been times of refreshing or times of awakening, they cannot say.

They can tell you what and how many cases of discipline have passed through their hands, but whether any of these have issued in godly sorrow for sin, whether the professed penitents who

were absolved by them gave evidence of being washed and sanctified and justified, they can give no information. They never thought of such an issue. They can tell what is the attendance at Sunday school, and what are the abilities of the teacher, but how many of these precious little ones whom they have vowed to feed are seeking the Lord they know not, or whether their teacher be a man of prayer and piety, they cannot say.

They can tell you the population of their parish, the number of their congregation, or the temporal condition of their flocks, but as to their spiritual state, how many have been awakened from the sleep of death, how many are followers of God as dear children, they cannot pretend to say. Perhaps they would deem it rashness and presumption, if not fanaticism, to inquire. And yet they have sworn before men and angels to watch for their souls as they that must give account.

But oh, of what use are sermons, sacraments, schools, if souls are left to perish, if living religion be lost sight of, if the Holy Spirit be not sought, if men are left to grow up and die unpitied, unprayed for, unwarned, for God's glory and man's good. It was not so in other days. Our fathers really watched and preached for souls.

They asked and they expected a blessing. Nor were they denied it. They were blessed in turning many to righteousness.

Their lives record their successful labors. How refreshing the lives of those who lived only for the glory of God and the good of souls. There is something in their history that compels us to feel that they were ministers of Christ, true watchmen.

How cheering to read of Baxter and his labors at Kitterminster. How solemn to hear of Ben and his preaching, in regard to which it is said that men fell before him like slaked lime. And in the much-blessed labors of that man of God, the apostolic Whitefield, is there not much to humble us as well as to stimulate? Of Tanner, who was himself awakened under Whitefield, we read that he seldom preached one sermon in vain.

Of Berridge and Hicks, we are told that, in their missionary tours throughout England, they were blessed in one year to awaken four thousand souls. Oh, for these days again! Oh, for one day of Whitefield again! Thus one has written. The language we have been accustomed to adopt is this.

We must use the means and leave the event to God. We can do no more than employ the means. This is our duty, and having done this, we must leave the rest to Him who is the disposer of all things.

Such language sounds well, for it seems to be an acknowledgement of our own nothingness, and to savor of submission to God's sovereignty. But it is only sound. It has not really any substance in it, for though there is truth stamped on the face of it, there is falsehood at the root of it.

To talk of submission to God's sovereignty is one thing, but really to submit to it is another and quite different thing. Submission involves renunciation. Really to submit to God's sovereign disposal does always necessarily involve the deep renunciation of our own will in the matter concerned, and such a renunciation of the will can never be effected without a soul being brought through very severe and trying exercises of an inward and most humbling nature.

Therefore, whilst we are quietly satisfied in using the means without obtaining the end, and this costs us no such painful inward exercise and deep humbling as that alluded to, if we think that we are leaving the affair to God's disposal, we deceive ourselves, and the truth in this matter is not in us. No, really to give anything to God implies that the will, which is emphatically the heart, has been set on that thing, and if the heart has indeed been set on the salvation of sinners as the end to be answered by the means we use, we cannot possibly give up that end without, as was before observed, the heart being severely exercised and deeply pained by the renunciation of the will involved in it. When, therefore, we can be quietly content to use the means for saving souls without seeing them saved thereby, it is because there is no renunciation of the will, that is, no real giving up to God in the affair.

The fact is, the will, that is, the heart, had never really been set upon this end. If it had, it could not possibly give up such an end without being broken by the sacrifice. When we can thus be satisfied to use the means without obtaining the end, and speak of it as though we were submitting to the Lord's disposal, we use a truth to hide a falsehood, exactly in the same way that those formalists in religion do who continue in forms and duties without going beyond them, though they know they will not save them, and who, when they are warned of their danger and earnestly entreated to seek the Lord with all the heart, reply by telling us they know they must repent and believe, but that they cannot do either of the one or the other of themselves, and that they must wait till God gives them grace to do so.

Now, this is a truth absolutely considered, yet most of us can see that they are using it as a falsehood to cover and excuse a great insincerity of heart. We can readily perceive that if their hearts were really set upon salvation, they could not rest satisfied without it. Their contentedness is the result not of heart submission to God, but in reality of heart indifference to the salvation of their own souls, covering falsehood with truth.

Exactly so it is with us as ministers, when we can rest satisfied with using the means for saving souls without seeing them really saved, or we ourselves being brokenhearted by it, and at the same time quietly talk of leaving the event to God's disposal, we make use of a truth to cover and excuse a falsehood. For our ability to leave the matter thus is not, as we imagine, the result of heart submission to God, but of heart indifference to the salvation of the souls we deal with. No, truly, if the heart is really set on such an end, it must gain that end, or break in losing it.

He that saved our souls has taught us to weep over the unsaved. Lord, let that mind be in us that was in thee. Give us thy tears to weep, for, Lord, our hearts are hard toward our fellows.

We can see thousands perish around us, and our sleep never be disturbed. No vision of their awful doom ever scaring us, no cry from their lost souls ever turning our peace into bitterness. Our families, our schools, our congregations, not to speak of our cities at large, our land, our world, might well send us daily to our knees, for the loss of even one soul is terrible beyond conception.

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered the heart of man what a soul in hell must suffer forever. Lord, give us bowels of mercies. What a mystery! The soul and eternity of one man depends upon the voice of another.

Chapter 4 Ministerial Confession Remember, therefore, from when thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his

place, except thou repent. Revelation 2 In the year 1651, the Church of Scotland, feeling, in regard to her ministers, how deep their hand was in the transgression, and that ministers had no small accession to the drawing on of the judgments that were upon the land, drew up what they called a humble acknowledgment of the sins of the ministry. This document is a striking and searching one.

It is perhaps one of the fullest, most faithful, and most impartial confessions of ministerial sin ever made. A few extracts from it will suitably introduce this chapter on ministerial confession. It begins with confessing sins before entrance on the ministry.

Lightness and profanity in conversation unsuitable to that holy calling which they did intend, not thoroughly repented of. Not studying to be in Christ before they be in the ministry, nor to have the practical knowledge and experience of the mystery of the gospel in themselves before they preach it to others. Neglecting to fit themselves for the work of the ministry, and not improving prayer and fellowship with God, opportunities of a lively ministry and other means, and not mourning for these neglects.

Not studying self-denial, nor resolving to take up the cross of Christ. Negligence to entertain a sight and sense of sin and misery, not wrestling against corruption, nor studying mortification and subduedness of spirit. Of entrance on the ministry it thus speaks, entering to the ministry without respect to a commission from Jesus Christ, by which it hath come to pass that many have run unsest.

Entering to the ministry not from the love of Christ, nor from a desire to honor God in gaining of souls, but for a name and for a livelihood in the world, notwithstanding a solemn declaration to the contrary at admission. Of the sins after entrance on the ministry it thus searchingly enumerates, ignorance of God, want of nearness with Him, and taking up little of God in reading, meditating, and speaking of Him. Exceeding great selfishness in all that we do, acting from ourselves, for ourselves, and to ourselves.

Not caring how unfaithful and negligent others were, so being it might contribute a testimony to our faithfulness and diligence, but being rather content, if not rejoicing, at their faults. Least delight in those things wherein lieth our nearest communion with God, great inconstancy in our walk with God, and negligent of acknowledging Him in all our ways, and going about duties least careful of those things which are most remote from the eyes of men. Seldom in secret prayer with God, except to fit for public performance, and even that much neglected, or gone about very superficially.

Part 2

Glad to find excuses. Glad to find excuses for the neglect of duties. Neglecting the reading of scriptures in secret, for edifying ourselves as Christians, only reading them in so far as may fit us for our duty as ministers, and oft times neglecting that.

Not given to reflect upon our own ways, nor allowing conviction to have a thorough work upon us. Deceiving ourselves by resting upon absence from, and abhorrence of, evils from the light of a natural conscience, and looking upon the same as an evidence of a real change of state and nature. Evil guarding of and watching over the heart, and carelessness in self-searching, which makes much unacquaintedness with ourselves, and estrangedness from God.

Not guarding nor wrestling against seen and known evils, especially our predominance. A facility to be drawn away with the temptations of the time, and other particular temptations according to our inclinations and fellowship. Instability in wavering in the ways of God, through the fears of persecutions, hazard, or loss of esteem, and declining duties because of the fear of jealousies and reproaches.

Not esteeming the cross of Christ and sufferings for His name, honorable, but rather shifting sufferings from self-love. Deadness of spirit after all the sore strokes of God upon the land. Little conscience made of secret humiliation and fasting, by ourselves, apart, and in our families, that we might mourn for our own and the land's guiltiness and great backslidings.

And little applying of public humiliation to our own hearts. Finding of our own pleasure when the Lord calls for our humiliation. Not laying to heart the sad and heavy sufferings of the people of God abroad, and the not thriving of the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the power of godliness among them.

Refined hypocrisy, desiring to appear what, indeed, we are not. Studying more to learn the language of God's people than their exercise. Artificial confessing of sin without repentance, professing to declare iniquity and not resolving to be sorry for sin.

Confession in secret, much slighted, even of those things whereof we are convicted. No reformation after solemn acknowledgments and private vows. Thinking ourselves exonerated after confession.

Readier to search out and censure faults in others than to see or deal with them in ourselves. Accounting of our estate and way according to the estimation that others have of us. Estimation of men as they agree with or disagree from us.

Not fearing to meet with trials, but presuming in our own strength to go through them unshaken. Not learning to fear by the falls of gracious men, nor mourning and praying for them. Not observing particular deliverances and punishments, not improving of them for the honor of God and the edification of ourselves and others.

Little or no mourning for the corruption of our nature, and less groaning under and longing to be delivered from that body of death, the bitter root of all our other evils. Fruitless conversing ordinarily with others for the worse rather than for the better. Foolish jesting away of time with impertinent and useless discourse, very unbecoming the ministers of the gospel.

Spiritual purposes often dying in our hands when they are begun by others. Carnal familiarity with natural, wicked and malignant men whereby they are hardened, the people of God stumbled and we ourselves blunted. Loving pleasure more than God.

Sliding of fellowship with those by whom we might profit. Desiring more to converse with those that might better us by their talents than with such as might edify us by their graces. Not studying opportunities of doing good to others.

Shifting of prayer and other duties when called thereto, choosing rather to omit the same than that we should be put to them ourselves. Abusing of time in frequent recreation in pastimes and loving our pleasures more than God. Taking little or no time to Christian discourse with young men trained up for the ministry.

Common and ordinary discourse on the Lord's Day. Sliding Christian admonition from any of our flocks or others as being below us. The shame to take light and warning from private Christians.

Dislike of or bitterness against such as deal freely with us by admonition or reproof and not dealing faithfully with others who would welcome it off our hands. Not praying for men of a contrary judgment but using reservedness and distance from them. Being more ready to speak of them than to them or to God for them.

Not weighed with the failings and miscarriages of others but rather taking advantage thereof for justifying ourselves. Talking of and sporting at the faults of others rather than compassionating of them. Nor do painstaking and religious ordering of our families nor studying to be patterns to other families in the government of ours.

Hasty anger and passion in our families and conversation with others. Covetousness, worldly mindedness and an inordinate desire after the things of this life upon which followeth a neglect of the duties of our calling and are being taken up for the most part with the things of the world. Want of hospitality and charity to the members of Christ.

Not cherishing godliness in the people and some being afraid of it and hating the people of God for piety and studying to bear down and quench the work of the Spirit amongst them. Trusting in our own ability. Not entertaining that edge of spirit and ministerial duties which we found at the first entry to the ministry.

Great neglect of reading and other preparation or preparation merely literal and bookish. Making an idol of a book which hindereth communion with God or presuming on bygone assistance and praying little. Trusting to gifts, talents and pains taken for preparation whereby God has provoked a blast good matter well ordered and worded.

Careless in employing Christ and drawing virtue out of him for enabling us to preach in the spirit and empower. In praying for assistance we pray more for assistance to the messenger than to the message which we carry. Not caring what becomes of the word if we be with some measure of

assistance carried on in the duty.

The matter we bring forth is not seriously recommended to God by prayer to be quickened to his people. Neglect of prayer after the word is preached. Neglect to warn in preaching of snares and sins in public affairs by some and too much too frequent and unnecessary speaking by others of public business and transactions.

Exceeding great neglect and unskillfulness to set forth the excellences and usefulness of and the necessity of an interest in Jesus Christ and the new covenant which ought to be the great subject of a minister's study and preaching. Speaking of Christ more by hearsay than from knowledge and experience or any real impression of him upon the heart. The way of most ministers preaching too legal.

Want of sobriety in preaching the gospel. Not savoring anything but what is new so that the substantials of religion bear but little bulk. Not preaching Christ in the simplicity of the gospel nor ourselves the people's servants for Christ's sake.

Preaching of Christ not that the people may know him but that they may think we know much of him. Preaching about Christ's leaving of the world without brokenness of heart or stirring up of ourselves to take hold of him. Not preaching with bowels of compassion to them that are in hazard to perish.

Preaching against public sins neither in such a way nor for such an end as we ought. For the gaining of souls and drawing men out of their sins but rather because it is to our advantage to say something of these evils. Attitude toward our opponents.

Bitterness instead of zeal in speaking against malignance sectarians and other scandalous persons. An unfaithfulness therein. Not studying to know the particular condition of the souls of people that we may speak to them accordingly.

Nor keeping a particular record thereof though convinced of the usefulness of this. Not carefully choosing what may be most profitable in edifying. And want of wisdom in an application to the several conditions of souls.

Not so careful to bring home the point by application as to find out the doctrine. Nor speaking the same with that reverence which becomes his word and message. Choosing texts whereon we have something to say rather than those suited to the conditions of souls and times and frequent preaching of the same things that we may not be put to the pains of new study.

Such a way of reading preaching and prayer as puts us in these duties farther from God. Too soon satisfied in the discharge of duties and holding off challenges of conscience with excuses. Indulging the body and wasting much time idly.

Too much eyeing our own credit and applause and being pleased with it when we get it and unsatisfied when it is wanting. Timorousness in delivering God's message. Letting people die in reigning sins without warning.

Studying the discharge of duties rather than to free ourselves from censure than to approve ourselves to God. Not making all the counsel of God known to his people and particularly not

giving testimony in times of defection. Not studying to profit by our own doctrine nor the doctrine of others.

For most part preaching as if we ourselves were not concerned in the message which we carry to the people. Not rejoicing at the conversion of sinners but content with the unthiving of the Lord's work amongst his people as suiting best with our minds. Fearing if they should thrive better we should be more put to it and less esteemed of by them.

Many in preaching and practice bearing down the power of godliness. We preach not as before God but as to men as doth appear by the different pains in our preparation to speak to our ordinary hearers and to others to whom we would approve ourselves. Negligent, lazy, impartial visiting of the sick.

If they be poor we go once and only when sent for. If they be rich in a better note we go oftener and unsent for. Not knowing how to speak with the tongue of the learned a word in season to the weary.

Lazy and negligent in catechizing. Not preparing our hearts before nor wrestling with God for a blessing to it because of the ordinariness and apprehended easiness of it whereby the Lord's name is much taken in vain and the people little profited. Looking on that exercise as a work below us and not condescending to study a right and profitable way of instructing the Lord's people.

Partial in catechizing passing by those that are rich in a better quality though many of such stand ordinarily in great need of instruction. Not waiting upon and following the ignorant but often passionately upbraiding them. These are solemn confessions the confessions of men who knew the nature of that ministry on which they had entered and who were desirous of approving themselves to him who had called them that they might give in their account with joy and not with grief.

Confessing our shortcomings let us as they did deal honestly with ourselves. Our confessions ought to be no less ample and surging. One we have been unfaithful the fear of man and the love of his applause have often made us afraid.

We have been unfaithful to our own souls to our flocks and to our brethren. Unfaithful in the pulpit, in visiting, in discipline, in the church. In the discharge of every one of the duties of our stewardship there has been grievous unfaithfulness.

Instead of the special particularization of the sin reprov'd there has been the vague illusion. Instead of the bold reproof there has been the timid hint. Instead of the uncompromising condemnation there has been the feeble disapproval.

Instead of the unswerving consistency of a holy life whose uniform tenor should be a protest against the world in a rebuke of sin there has been such an amount of unfaithfulness in our walk and conversation in our daily department and intercourses with others that any degree of faithfulness we have been enabled to manifest on the Lord's Day is almost neutralized by the want of circumspection which our weekday life exhibits. Archbishop Usher's example. Few men ever lived a life so busy and so devoted to God as Usher, Archbishop of Armagh.

His learning, habits of business, station, friends, all contributed to keep his hands every moment full and then his was a soul that seemed continually to hear a voice saying, redeem the time for the days are evil. Early too did he begin for at ten years of age he was hopefully converted by a sermon preached on Romans 12 1. I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. He was a painstaking laborious preacher of the word for 55 years yet hear him on his deathbed how he clings to Christ's righteousness alone and sees in himself even after such a life only sin and want.

The last words he was heard to utter were about one o'clock in the afternoon and these words were uttered in a loud voice. But Lord in special forgive me my sins of omission. It was omissions says his biographer he begged forgiveness of with his most fervent last breath.

He who was never known to omit an hour but who employed the shred ends of his life for his great Lord and Master. The very day he took his last sickness he rose up from writing one of his great works and went out to visit a sick woman to whom he spoke so fitly and fully that you would have taken him to have spoken of heaven before he came there. Yet this man was oppressed with a sense of his omissions.

Reader what think you of yourself your undone duties your unimproved hours times of prayer omitted you're shrinking from unpleasant work and putting it on others you're being content to sit under your vine and fig tree without using all efforts for the souls of others. Lord in special forgive me my sins of omission. Hear the confession of Edwards in regard both to personal and ministerial sins.

Often I have very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness. Very frequently to such a degree as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping sometimes for a considerable time together so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness and the badness of my heart than ever I had before my conversion.

My wickedness as I am in myself has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable swallowing up all thought in imagination. I know not how to express better what my sins appeared to me to be than by heaping infinite upon infinite and multiplying infinite by infinite. When I look into my heart and take a view of my wickedness it looks like an abyss infinitely deeper than hell and yet it seems to me that my conviction of sin is exceedingly small and faint.

It is enough to amaze me that I have no more sense of my sin. I've greatly longed of late for a broken heart and to lie low before God. Worldliness stunts the conscience.

2. We have been carnal and unspiritual. The tone of our life has been low and earthly. Associating too much and too intimately with the world we have in a great measure become accustomed to its ways.

Hence our tastes have been vitiated, our consciences blunted and that sensitive tenderness of feeling which while it turns not back from suffering yet shrinks from the remotest contact with sin has worn off and given place to an amount of callousness of which we once in fresher days believed ourselves incapable. Perhaps we can call to mind a time when our views and aims were fixed upon a standard of almost unearthly elevation and contrasting these with our present state we are startled at the painful changes and besides intimacy with the world other causes have

operated in producing this deterioration in the spirituality of our minds. The study of truth and its dogmatical more than its devotional form has robbed it of its freshness and power.

Daily hourly occupation and the routine of ministerial labor has engendered formality and coldness. Continual employment in the most solemn duties of our office such as dealing with souls in private about their immortal welfare or guiding the meditations and devotions of God's assembled people or handling the sacramental symbols this gone about often with so little prayer and mixed with so little faith has tended grievously to divest us of that profound reverence and godly fear which ever ought to possess and pervade us. How truly and with what emphasis we may say I am carnal sold unto sin.

Romans 7 14. The world has not been crucified to us nor we unto the world the flesh with its members has not been mortified. What a sad effect all this has had not only upon our peace of soul on our growth in grace but upon the success of our ministry.

Three we have been selfish we have shrunk from toil difficulty and endurance counting not only our lives dear unto us but even our temporal ease and comfort. We have sought to please ourselves instead of obeying Romans 15 to let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. We have not borne one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ Galatians 6 2. We've been worldly and covetous we have not presented ourselves unto God as living sacrifices laying ourselves our lives our substance our time our strength our faculties are all upon his altar.

We seem altogether to have lost sight of this self-sacrificing principle on which even as Christians but much more as ministers we are called upon to act. We have had little idea of anything like sacrifice at all up to the point where a sacrifice was demanded we may have been willing to go but there we stood counting it unnecessary perhaps calling it imprudent and unadvised to proceed further. Yet what not the life of every Christian especially of every minister to be a life of self-sacrifice and self-denial throughout even as was the life of him who pleased not himself.

Four we have been slothful we have been sparing of our toil we have not endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ even when we have been instant in season we have not been so out of season neither have we sought to gather up the fragments of our time that not a moment might be thrown idly or unprofitably away. Precious hours and days have been wasted in sloth in company in pleasure in idle and desultory breeding that might have been devoted to the closet the study the pulpit or the meeting. Indolence self-indulgence fickleness flesh-pleasing have eaten like a canker into our ministry arresting the blessing and marring our success.

It cannot be said of us for my namesake thou hast labored and hast not fainted revelation 2 3. Alas we have fainted or at least grown weary and well-doing we have not made conscience of our work we have not dealt honestly with the church to which we pledged the vows of ordination we have dealt deceitfully with God whose servants we profess to be we have manifested but little of the unwearied self-denying love with which as shepherds we ought to have watched over the flocks committed to our care we fed ourselves and not the flock 5 we have been cold even when diligent how little warmth and glow the whole soul is not poured into the duty and hence it wears too often the repulsive air of routine and form we do not speak and act like men in earnest our words are feeble even when sound and true our looks are careless even when our words are weighty and our tones betray the apathy which both words and looks disguise love is wanting deep love love

strong as death love such as made Jeremiah weep in secret places for the pride of Israel and Paul speak even weeping of the enemies of the cross of Christ in preaching and visiting and counseling and reproving what formality what coldness a little tenderness and affection oh that I was all heart said rolling hill and soul and spirit to tell the glorious gospel of Christ to perishing multitudes afraid to tell the whole truth 6 we have been timid fear has often led us to smooth down or generalized truths which have broadly stated must have brought hatred and reproach upon us we have thus often failed to declare to our people the whole counsel of God we have shrunk from reproving rebuking and exhorting with all long-suffering and doctrine we have feared to alienate friends or to awaken the wrath of enemies hence our preaching of a free gospel has been yet more vague uncertain and timorous we're greatly deficient in that majestic boldness and nobility of spirit which peculiarly marked Luther Calvin Knox and the mighty men of the Reformation of Luther it was said every word was a thunderbolt 7 we have been wanting in solemnity in reading the lives of how or Baxter a brainer or Edwards we are in company with men who in solemnity of deportment and gravity of demeanor were truly of the apostolic school we feel that these men must have carried weight with them both in their words and lives we see also the contrast between ourselves and them in respect of that deep solemnity of air and tone which made men feel that they walked with God how deeply ought we to be abased at our levity frivolity flippancy vain mirth foolish talking and jesting by which grievous injury has been done to souls the progress of the Saints retarded and the world countenance and it's wretched vanities preaching self instead of Christ eight we have preached ourselves not Christ we have sought applause courted honor been avaricious of fame and jealous of our reputation we're preached too often so as to exalt ourselves instead of magnifying Christ so as to draw men's eyes to ourselves instead of fixing them on him and his cross nay and have we not often preached Christ for the very purpose of getting honor to ourselves Christ in the sufferings of his first coming in the glory of his second has not been the Alpha and the Omega the first and the last of all our sermons nine we have used words of man's wisdom we have forgotten Paul's resolution to avoid the enticing words of man's wisdom lest he should make the cross of Christ of none effect we have reversed his reasoning as well as his resolution and acted as if by well-studied well-polished well-reasoned discourses we could so gild and beautify the cross as to make it no longer repulsive but irresistibly attractive to the carnal eye hence we have often sent men home well satisfied with themselves convinced that they were religious because they were affected by our eloquence touched by our appeals or persuaded by our arguments in this way we have made the cross of Christ of none effect and sent souls to hell with a lie in their right hand thus by avoiding the offense of the cross and the foolishness of preaching we have had to labor in vain and mourn over an unblessed unfruitful ministry 10 we have not fully preached a free gospel we have been afraid of making it too free less men should be led into licentiousness as if it were possible to preach to free a gospel or as if its freeness could lead men into sin it is only a free gospel that can bring peace and it is only a free gospel that can make men holy Luther's preaching was summed up in these two points that we are justified by faith alone and that we must be assured that we are justified and it was this that he urged his brother Brentius to preach and it was by such free full bold preaching of the glorious gospel untrammelled by works merits terms conditions and uncluttered by the fancy humility of doubts fears uncertainties that such blessed success accompanied his labors let us go and do likewise allied to this is the necessity of insisting on the sinners immediate turning to God and demanding in the master's name the sinners immediate surrender of heart to Christ strains that sudden

conversions should be so much disliked by some ministers they are the most scriptural of all conversions too little emphasis on God's Word 11 we have not duly studied and honored the Word of God we have given a greater prominence to man's writings man's opinions man's systems in our studies than to the word we have drunk more out of human cisterns than divine we have held more communion with man than God hence the mold and fashion of our spirits our lives our words have been derived more from man than God we must study the Bible more we must steep our souls in it we must not only lay it up within us but transfuse it through the whole texture of the soul 12 we have not been men of prayer the spirit of prayer has slumbered amongst us the closet has been too little frequented and delighted in we have allowed business study or active labor to interfere with our closet hours and the feverish atmosphere in which both the church and nation are enveloped has found its way into our closet disturbing the sweet calm of its blessed solitude sleep company idle visiting foolish talking ingesting idle reading unprofitable occupations and gross time that might have been redeemed for prayer time for everything for prayer why is there so little anxiety to get time to pray why is there so little forethought in the laying out of time and employment so as to secure a large portion of each day for prayer why is there so much speaking yet so little prayer why is there so much running to and fro yet so little prayer why so much bustle and business yet so little prayer why so many meetings with our fellow men yet so few meetings with God why so little being alone so little thirsting of the soul for the calm sweet hours of unbroken solitude when God and his child hold fellowship together as if they could never part it is the want of these solitary hours that not only injures our own growth in grace but makes us such unprofitable members of the Church of Christ and that renders our lives useless in order to grow in grace we must be much alone it is not in society even Christian society that the soul grows most rapidly and vigorously in one single quiet hour of prayer it will often make more progress than in days of company with others it is in the desert that the dew falls freshest and the air is purest so with the soul it is when none but God is nigh when his presence alone like the desert air in which there is mingled no noxious breath of man surrounds and pervades the soul it is then that the eye gets the clearest simplest view of eternal certainties it is then that the soul gathers in wondrous refreshment and power and energy and so it is also in this way that we become truly useful to others it is when coming out fresh from communion with God that we go forth to do his work successfully it is in the closet that we get our vessels so filled with blessing that when we come forth we cannot contain it to ourselves but must as by a blessed necessity pour it out with us wherever we go we cannot say as did Isaiah my lord I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime and I am set in my ward whole nights Isaiah 21 8 our life has not been a lying in wait for the voice of God speak Lord for thy servant here it for Samuel 3 9 has not been the attitude of our souls the guiding principle of our lives nearness to God fellowship with God waiting upon God resting in God have been too little the characteristic either of our private or our ministerial walk hence our example has been so powerless our labor so unsuccessful a sermon so meager our whole ministry so fruitless and feeble seeking the spirit strength 13 we have not honored the Spirit of God it may be that in words we have recognized his agency but we have not kept this continually before our eyes in the eyes of the people we have not given him the glory that is due unto his name we have not sought his teaching his anointing the unction from the Holy One whereby ye know all things 1st John 2 20 neither in the study of the word nor the preaching of it to others have we duly acknowledged his office as the enlightener of the understanding the revealer of the truth the testifier and glorifier of Christ we have grieved him by the dishonor done to his person as the third person of the glorious

Trinity and we have grieved him by the slight put upon his office as the teacher the convincer the comforter the sanctifier hence he has almost departed from us and left us to reap the fruit of our own perversity and unbelief besides we have grieved him by our inconsistent walk by our want of circumspection by worldly mindedness by our unholiness by our prayerlessness by our unfaithfulness by our want of solemnity by a life and conversation so little in conformity with the character of a disciple or the office of the ambassador an old Scottish minister thus writes concerning himself I find a want of the spirit of the power and demonstration of the spirit in praying speaking and exhorting that whereby men are mainly convinced and whereby they are a terror and a wonder unto others so as they stand in awe of them that glory and majesty whereby respect and reverence are procured that whereby Christ's sermons were differenced from those of the scribes and Pharisees which I judged to be the beams of God's majesty and of the spirit of holiness breaking out and shining through his people but my foul garments are on woe is me the crown of glory and majesty has fallen off my head my words are weak and carnal not mighty whereby contempt is bred no remedy for this but humility self-loathing and a striving to maintain fellowship with God too little imitation of Christ 14 we have had little of the mind of Christ we have come far short of the example of the Apostles much more of Christ we are far behind the servants much father behind the master we've had little of the grace the compassion the meekness the lowliness the love of God's eternal son his weeping over Jerusalem is a feeling in which we have but little heartfelt sympathy his seeking of the lost is little imitated by us his unwary teaching of the multitudes we shrink from as too much for flesh and blood his days of fasting his nights of watchfulness and prayer are not fully realized as models for us to copy his counting not his life dear unto him that he might glorify the father and finish the work given him to do is but little remembered by us as the principle on which we are to act it surely we are to follow his steps the servant is to walk where his master has led the way the under shepherd is to be what the chief shepherd was we must not seek rest or ease in a world where he whom we love had none chapter 5 revival in the ministry it is easier to speak or write about revival than to set about it there is so much rubbish to be swept out so many self-raised hindrances to be dealt with so many old habits to be overcome so much sloth and easy-minded is to be contended with so much of ministerial routine to be broken through and so much crucifixion both of self and of the world to be undergone as Christ said of the unclean spirit which the disciples could not cast out so we may say of these this kind go without but by prayer and fasting so could a minister in the 17th century for after lamenting the evils both of his life in his ministry he thus resolves to set about their renewal one an imitation of Christ and his apostles and to get good done I purpose to rise timely every morning to to prepare as soon as I am up some work to be done and how and when to do it to engage my heart to it and that even to call myself to account and to mourn over my failings three to spend a sufficient portion of time every day in prayer reading meditating spiritual exercises morning midday evening and air I go to bed for once in a month either the end or middle of it I keep a day of humiliation for the public condition for the Lord's people in their sad condition for raising up the work and people of God five I spend besides this one day for my own private condition and fighting against spiritual evils and to get my heart more holy or to get some special exercise accomplished once in six months six I spend once every week four hours over and above my daily portion in private for some special causes relating either to myself or others seven to spend some time on Saturday towards night for preparation for the Lord's Day eight to spend six or seven days together once a year when most convenient holy and only on spiritual accounts today's need for

revival such was the way in which he said about personal and ministerial revival let's take an example from him if he needed it much we need it more in the fifth and sixth centuries Gildas and Salvi and arose to alarm and arouse a careless church in a formal ministry in the 16th such was the task which devolved on the reformers in the 17th Baxter among others took a prominent part in stimulating the languid piety and dormant energies of his fellow ministers in the 18th God raised up some choice and noble men to awaken the church and lead the way to a higher and bolder career of ministerial duty the present century stands no less in need of some such stimulating influence we have experienced many symptoms of life but still the mass is not quickened we require some new Baxter to arouse us by his voice and his example is the melancholy to see the amount of ministerial anger and inefficiency that still overspreads our land how long Oh Lord how long the infusion of new life into the ministry ought to be the object of more direct and special effort as well as of more united and fervent prayer the prayers of Christians ought to be more largely directed to the students the preachers the ministers of the Christian Church it is a living ministry that our country needs and without such a ministry it cannot long expect to escape the judgments of God we need men that will spend and be spent that will labor and pray that will watch and weep for souls how Myconius learned his lesson in the life of Myconius the friend of Luther as given by Melchior Adam we had the following beautiful and striking account of an event which proved the turning point in his history and led him to devote his energies to the cause of Christ the first night that he entered the monastery intending to become a monk he dreamed and it seemed as if he was ranging a vast wilderness alone suddenly a guide appeared and led him onwards to a most lovely veil warded by a pleasant stream of which he was not permitted to taste and then to a marble fountain of pure water he tried to kneel and drink one low a crucified Savior stood forth to view from whose wounds gushed the copious stream in a moment his guide flung him into the fountain his mouth met the flowing wounds and he drank most sweetly never to thirst again no sooner was he refreshed himself than he was led away by his guide to be taught what great things he was yet to do for the crucified one whose precious wounds had poured the living water into his soul he came to a wide-stretching plain covered with waving grain his guide ordered him to reap he excused himself by saying that he was wholly unskilled in such labor what you know not you shall learn was the reply they came nearer and he saw a solitary reaper toiling at the sickle with such prodigious effort as if he were determined to reap the whole field himself the guide ordered him to join this laborer and seizing a sickle showed him how to proceed again the guide led him to a hill he surveyed the vast plain beneath him and wondering asked how long it would take to reap such a field with so few laborers before winter the last sickle must be thrust in replied his guide proceed with all your might the Lord of the harvest will send more reapers soon wearied with his labor my conious rested for a while again the crucified one was at his side wasted and marred in form the guide laid his hand on my conious saying you must be conformed to him for these words the dreamer awoke but he awoke to a life of zeal and love he found the Savior for his own soul and he went forth to preach of him to others he took his place by the side of that noble reaper Martin Luther he was stimulated by his example and toiled with him in the vast field till laborers arose on every side and the harvest was reaped before the winter came the lesson to us is thrust in your sickles the fields are white and they are wide encompassed the laborers a few but there are some devoted ones toiling there already in other years we have seen Whitfield and Hill putting forth their enormous efforts as if they would reap the whole field alone let us join ourselves to such men and the Lord of the harvest will not leave us to toil alone reaping the great harvest when do you intend

to stop was the question once put by a friend to Roland Hill not till we have carried all before us was the proper reply such as our answer to the fields are vast the grain whitens the harvest waves and through grace we shall go forth with our sickles never to rest or we shall lie down with the lamb himself shall lead us by the living fountains of waters where God shall wipe off the sweat of toil from our weary foreheads and dry up all the tears of earth from our weeping eyes some of us are young and fresh many days may yet be in the providence of God before us these must be days of strenuous ceaseless persevering and if God bless us successful toil we shall labor till we are worn out and laid to rest Vincent the non-conformist minister in a small volume on the great plague and fire in London entitled God's terrible voice in the city gives a description of the manner in which the faithful ministers who remain amid the danger discharge their solemn duties to the dying inhabitants and of the manner in which the terrorist stricken multitudes hung with breathless eagerness upon their lips to drink in salvation near the dreaded pestilence and swept them away to the tomb churches were flung open but the pulpits were silent for there was none to occupy them the hirelings had fled preaching to plague victims then did God's faithful band of persecuted ones come forth from their hiding places to fill the forsaken pulpits then did they stand up in the midst of the dying and the dead to proclaim eternal life to men who were expecting death before the morrow they preached in season and out of season weekday or Sunday was the same to them the hour might be canonical or uncanonical it mattered not they did not stand upon nice points of ecclesiastical regularity or irregularity they lifted up their voices like trumpets and spared not every sermon might be their last graves were lying open around them life seemed now not merely a hand breath but a hair breath death was nearer now than ever eternity stood out in all its vast reality souls were felt to be precious opportunities were no longer to be trifled away every hour possessed a value beyond the wealth of kingdoms the world was now a passing vanishing shadow and man's days on earth had been cut down from three score years and ten into the twinkling of an eye oh how they preached no polished periods no learned arguments no labored paragraphs chilled their appeals or rendered their discourses unintelligible no fear of men no love of popular applause no ever scrupulous dread of strong expressions no fear of excitement or enthusiasm prevented them from pouring out the whole fervor of their hearts that yearned with tenderness unutterable over dying souls thus did they preach and thus did they hear in those days of terror and death men were in earnest then both in speaking and hearing there was no coldness no longer no studied oratory truly they preach as dying men to dying men but the question is should it ever be otherwise should there ever be less fervor in preaching or less eagerness and hearing than there was then true life was a little shorter then but that was all death and its issues are still the same eternity is still the same the soul is still the same only one small element was thrown in then which does not always exist to such an extent namely the increased shortness of life but that was all the difference why then should our preaching be less fervent our appeals less affectionate our importunity less urgent we are a few steps farther from the shore of eternity that is all time may be a little stronger than it was then yet only a very little its everlasting issues are still as momentous as unchangeable surely it is our unbelief that makes the difference it is unbelief that makes ministers so cold in their preaching so slothful in visiting and so remiss in all their sacred duties we must be more in earnest if we would win souls we must be more in earnest if we would walk in the footsteps of our beloved Lord or if we would fulfill the vows that are upon us we must be more in earnest if we would be less than hypocrites we must be more in earnest if we would finish our course with joy and obtain the crown at the master's coming we must work while it is day

the night cometh when no man can work this is the end of the reading of words to winners of souls
by Horatius Bonar read by Joe Messier footnote some selected paragraphs near the end of the
book were eliminated so that this book might be completed on one tape

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