

The Personal Element of Religion

by Aaron Hills

The sermon emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility in Christianity, and the need for individuals to take initiative in their spiritual growth and development.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Matthew 25:15, Mark 9:24, John 14:1, Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4, Ephesians 2:10, Colossians 3:23, 1 Timothy 4:14

Topics: "Personal Responsibility", "Spiritual Gifts"

Description

Aaron Hills preaches about the importance of recognizing and embracing our individual responsibility to God, emphasizing the unique gifts, abilities, and opportunities that God has given to each person. He highlights the need for personal effort, zeal, and active engagement in sharing the Gospel and saving souls, pointing out the detrimental effects of neglecting one's personal duty and responsibility. Hills urges believers to be conscious of their distinct personality, to engage in personal service and special duties according to their gifts, and to understand the significance of individualism in fulfilling God's purposes.

Transcript

Rom. xii. 6; Matt. xxv. 15; 1 Tim. iv. 14.

Parts of three verses of Scripture put together make remarkable reading, and teach us impressive lessons much needed by us all.

Here they are:

Rom. xii. 6. "Having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us."

Matt. xxv. 15. "To every man according to his several ability."

1 Tim. iv. 14. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee."

It is said that America's illustrious statesman, Daniel Webster, was once asked at a dinner table, "What is the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?" He answered in all seriousness, "The most important thought that ever entered my mind was the thought of my individual responsibility to God." He enlarged on that thought for some minutes in matchless eloquence, while great men listened with astonishment in solemn silence, and then he appropriately arose and left the room as if to be alone with his God.

It is this sense of personal responsibility to God, and the expression of it toward men to which I wish to call the attention of my readers. There is a manifest want of individualism in church life and Christian activity, from which the kingdom of God is suffering great detriment. The trend of our time is toward clubs, corporations, lodges, fraternities, unions, organizations, companies, trusts, associations, and congregations; the individual is losing his identity, is wasting, is actually dying of self-neglect.

I write these words in the cheering hope that some readers may be aroused to self-consciousness and a sense of their personal obligations to men and to God. To this end I make the following observations:

1. God intentionally makes men to differ. He bestows on each a personality and an individuality all his own. Human beings destined for immortality are not made as bullets are run in a mold, all alike, to fill the same place, to do the same service, and to be used indiscriminately. We differ alike in natural endowments and in spiritual gifts. Each has his own peculiar form, features, tastes, inclinations, strength of will, balance of faculties, combination of powers and weaknesses, which make him peculiarly himself, unlike anyone else that ever did live, does live, or ever will live.

And we differ no less in our circumstances. No two souls move through life having precisely the same environment. Parentage, time of birth, domestic and social conditions, helps, hindrances, fortunes and misfortunes all more or less vary, sufficiently, at least, to give to the jewel of every life a setting all its own.

And likewise we differ in opportunities. God says to every soul, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door." No two have the same path lying before them, the same possibilities, the same successes and triumphs. Each soul has its own circle of influence as each star has its own separate orbit. To each his work is like the law of nature and of grace. A dew-drop has not the mission of a diamond. A lily-bulb has not the opportunity of an acorn. One is to produce a fragrant flower; the other is to grow into a forest monarch. So before the advancing feet of every soul, there opens an avenue of possible usefulness accessible to him alone.

2. I observe that as an ultimate fact, God knows us and deals with us as individuals. If He is to destroy an antediluvian world it is because each of the mighty mass has corrupted his way before God, and He prepares an ark for the saving of eight souls because they are individually righteous. If He sends the consuming flames of His wrath to devour Sodom, He does not forget to send His angels to deliver righteous Lot. If He decrees the doom of Jericho, He remembers the one woman of faith living upon the wall.

If He commissions the armies of Titus to destroy Jerusalem and annihilate a guilty nation, He tells His few believing children to escape to the mountains. "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel," says God; "There shall be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." This is God's way. His care is minute and particular. He knows all the secrets of each heart. He numbers the hairs of each head. He tasted death for every man. He offers Himself as a personal friend and Savior to each soul.

Luther used, it is said, to thank God for those little words, "my," "thee," "thou," "thy," "me," which are scattered so profusely through the Scriptures. "The Lord is my rock," "my fortress," "my deliverer." "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

These all show God's estimate of the importance of the distinct personality of man. Apart from all others he is born. Singly and for himself he is held accountable to God. He is to repent for himself, believe for himself, live by himself, die by himself, and finally be judged by himself and stand or fall as an individual at the bar of God.

III. As might be expected from the foregoing, God rightly expects special service of each. Each flower has its own fragrance to shed, each star its own attraction to exert -- its own light to emit; and each drop of water its own mission to fulfill. As Dr. Bushnell has wisely written: "If there were any smallest star in Heaven that had no place to fill, that oversight would beget a disturbance which no Leverier could compute; because it would be a real and eternal, and not merely a casual or apparent disorder. One grain of sand, more or less, would disturb or even fatally disorder the whole scheme of the heavenly motions. So nicely balanced and so carefully hung are the worlds, that even the grains of their dust are counted, and their places adjusted to a corresponding nicety. There is nothing included in the gross or total sum that could be dispensed with. The same is true with regard to the forces that are apparently irregular. Every particle of air is moved by laws of as great precision as the laws of the heavenly bodies, or, indeed, by the same laws; keeping its appointed place and serving its appointed use. Every odor exhales in the nicest conformity with its appointed place and law.

"Even the viewless and mysterious heat, stealing through the dark centers and impenetrable depths of the world, obeys its uses with unfaltering exactness, dissolving never so much as an atom that was not to be dissolved.

"What now shall we say of man, appearing as it were, in the great circle of uses? They are all adjusted for him: has he, then, no ends adjusted for himself? Noblest of all creatures and closest to God, as he certainly is, are we to say that his Creator has no definite thoughts concerning him, no place prepared for him to fill, no uses for him to serve, which are the reason for his existence?

"There is, then, I conclude, a definite and proper end or issue for every man's existence ... Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan, cherished for it in the heart of God -- a Divine biography marked out which it enters into life to live."

We may conclude, then, that God has laid upon each special duties, commensurate with his individual gifts and opportunities. There is a post of duty for every man in the army of the Lord, which he alone can fill, and which he has no right to abandon; nay, cannot abandon to another. The corporal cannot be the colonel, and the general cannot be a private. One must stand on guard and do picket duty; another must plan the campaign, and issue the orders and lead the hosts to battle. "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another." "And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministering; or he that teacheth to his teaching; or he that exhorteth to his exhorting; he that giveth let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth with diligence."

The rich man cannot pray or repent by proxy, nor can he delegate to others the duty of giving. He that is called to rule must not neglect his ruling, and sigh for the place of the teacher or prophet. As well might the foot abandon the duty of walking -- and clamor for the duties of the eye, or the ear, or the tongue. A duty to every man according to his several ability, and no provision for idlers, is the law of the kingdom of grace. A personal service, a personal effort, a personal obligation that is measured by no other man's degree of

efficiency or endeavor; but only by God's gift and the Heaven-sent opportunity, is the first requirement of our Lord. Such is the individualism of duty, the personal element which constitutes a fixed principle in the kingdom of Christ.

And corresponding with these special duties are special responsibilities. The eye has the ability to see and is responsible for seeing; the ear has the ability to hear and is responsible for hearing; the feet have the ability to walk and are responsible for locomotion. These several responsibilities can by no possibility be changed. They rest where they do in the very nature of things. The superintendent of a railroad has his individual responsibility; the train dispatcher has his; the brakeman has his; the switch-tender has his. The position of each lays upon him his special responsibility for the safety of the traveling public; he has a distinct commission to do a distinct thing. So long as the duties of the position are assumed, the attending responsibilities can never be transferred to any other human being.

And so it is in the kingdom of God. We are each called, by a discriminating, electing grace to do an especial work, which nobody else can do, and which, if neglected by any one of us, will be forever undone; and the terrible responsibility for the failure will forever darken the guilty soul.

We are witnesses for Christ, each with his own personal testimony to give in the court of the world. We were converted one at a time; and to each of us was given the charge, "Let him that heareth say, Come!" You notice it reads, "Let him say," let each one personally take up and send along down through the ages the blessed invitation to "come" and "take of the water of life freely."

And to encourage this individual effort and develop this sense of personal duty and responsibility, God has given promises of individual reward. Not the church that converteth a sinner, but "he that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death." It is not written the company that goeth forth with weeping, but "he that goeth forth with weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return, bringing his sheaves with him." And at the last it will not be said, "Well done, thou good and faithful church and society," but, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." We are "the salt of the earth," each Christian being a grain having his own personal savor of holy, sanctifying influence to exert. We are "the light of the world," each individual being expected to reflect his own rays which the "Sun of Righteousness" has shed upon his soul, each person shining "as a light in the world."

What a solemn, awful responsibility rests upon every individual Christian to discharge his duty, to meet his obligation, to be faithful to his trust!

IV. Notice the abounding evidence that a proper sense of the individuality and personal responsibility of the unit in our church membership is sadly deficient. I might cite as the crowning evidence the feeble triumphs of our churches, the comparatively few conversions that are reported in our year books.

A single fact will suffice. A paper lies before me showing that the Methodist Episcopal churches of Iowa for four out of the last five years, with one hundred and forty-seven thousand members, had an annual net loss in membership, and the aggregate loss for five years is three hundred and seventy-eight. What could such a vast army of Methodists have been about? Were they taking a Rip Van Winkle sleep for five years? Let us devoutly hope it will not last twenty!

No honest mind can go to the Scriptures and read its prophecies and promises of Gospel triumphs and believe that such meager results are all that Christians have a right to expect from faithful effort. God's Word is not untrue. The Gospel has lost none of its power or fitness to move wicked hearts. The cross of

Christ is not a waning power. We are compelled, then, to accept the alternative and conclude that the Gospel power is not applied, and due effort is not made to save men.

But the churches are running; the organizations are all manned; and at least, make a show of activity. Where lies the fault? I am forced to believe that there is an evil back of the organization and it is simply this, a lamentable deficiency of consecrated, prayerful, personal effort.

This is evidenced by the fact that the masses of men in immediate proximity to the churches are unrenewed, profane and recklessly godless. Christian truth is still the wisdom of God; the Spirit is still almighty to save; but the masses remain quiet and undisturbed, sleeping the sleep of death on the brink of Hell because no Spirit-filled individual goes to them personally and moves them by thundering alarms or tender persuasions to come to God.

Further evidence is also furnished in the painfully obvious want of Christian maturity and moral power in the majority of church members. God has made ample provision for the growing up of each believer out of weakness into the vigor of spiritual manhood, into great efficiency of Christian service. When we look for strength and maturity; the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, how often we find only infantile weakness. When we go to Christians seeking teachers, we find "they have need that one teach them again, and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat."

And why this want of growth and development? Simply because the powers of individual Christians have not been "exercised by reason of use"; because they have neglected the gifts that are in them, and have buried God-given talents in a napkin of sloth. Personal activity is a prime essential to personal growth in grace. The toilers become the strong men and women, the pillars of our churches. There are so many weak Christians because there are so many idle Christians, so few grown Christians because so few working Christians.

Another evidence is found in the joylessness of Christian experience about which we hear not a little. There is opportunity enough for joy in Christ's service. There is joy and peace in the Holy Ghost. There is an unspeakable delight to be derived from the consciousness of being a co-laborer with Jesus in His great work of redeeming the world.

St. Paul, in the midst of his trials and hardships and persecutions and imprisonments, was "as sorrowful yet always rejoicing." His great soul knew the unutterable joy of saving men.

If the children of the King are lean-spirited and dyspeptic, it is because spiritual inactivity has made them diseased. If the sons and daughters of God walk amidst shadows instead of in the blessed sunlight of Heaven's conscious approval, if their lips are filled with wailings instead of hallelujahs, it is because they do not seek the empowering and put forth continuous, persevering effort to save souls. To travail in spirit until hearts are born again is to have one's own heart filled with transports of joy befitting the bosom of an angel. It is to have rich foretastes of Heaven.

Further evidence of this weak sense of personal responsibility is seen in parental neglect of the spiritual interests of children. From multiplying evidence of the most varied kind it is apparent that legions of believing parents do not make any personal application of Divine truth to the hearts of their children, do not lovingly and prayerfully teach them the Word of God, do not talk with them alone on the most sacred and vital of all subjects -- their personal relation to Christ. And then these parents hope to compound with their consciences by sending their children to the Sabbath-school. As if they had any right to turn over to

some other irresponsible person the religious training of the children which God has given to them to guide and prepare for Heaven.

When I was a student at Yale I was a member of the same church with the venerable ex-President Woolsey. He had two young daughters by a late marriage. He would not send them to the Sabbath-school, for he said God held him responsible for their training, and he spent a portion of Sunday afternoon teaching them.

Still more proof comes in the all too prevalent disposition to relegate to ministers the sole work of converting men. This is a vile relic of popery and one of Satan's most diabolical devices, this custom of regarding ministers as a class distinct from all others, to whom are entrusted all the concerns of religion. Perhaps unconsciously, but none the less really, many believers look upon the work of securing the conversion of men as a purely professional matter. As well might all the soldiers stand idly by and leave their generals to fight the battles! How utterly unlike the primitive church is this! Deacon Stephen and Deacon Philip were as anxious and laborious to secure the conversion of people as were the Apostles Peter and James, and there was a blessed band of yokefellows, men and women, who labored with the apostles in the Gospel. No doubt all the early believers understood that they were individually to do their utmost to multiply disciples for the Master, and this was as much the rule of life as it is now the exception. Today societies are somehow looked upon as substitutes for persons; self is lost in the congregation; the church is expected to be active while the individuals who compose it contentedly remain inactive; it is expected to gather in members whether the individuals gather any or not, as if the whole could be greater or do more than the aggregate of its parts.

And so it is that individualism is being crushed under ponderous organizations, and the precious disciples of the Lord are wasting innumerable opportunities, and are losing their sense of personal responsibility and all due conception of the calling of God and the grand end of life! Ah, how it delights Satan! Little does he care how vast the church is as a mass if only each individual member will sleep.

I will mention but one more sad indication of this evil. It is a common and well-nigh unchallenged saying that corporations have no souls. But pray tell, why not? They are composed of men, and men have souls. What is the real underlying reason but this, that the individual members of corporations, many of them Christians, have barricaded their consciences behind their business charters and have conveniently buried their honor and pity and justice and humanity in their articles of agreement. The corporation can now practice the grossest injustice, the most overreaching selfishness, and for the sake of gain can scout morals, drive men to the wall, drive hard bargains and grind their employees to the very dust. And if you go to each individual of the corporation and ask for explanation or redress, he will say: "Oh, it is too bad, quite too bad; but I am not responsible; the company did that!"

But, by and by, death will dissolve their soulless partnerships, and the individuals who composed them, standing at the bar of a holy God, will learn to their surprise and sorrow that somebody was responsible.

V. I would now call attention to some considerations which show the absolute necessity of more personal effort on the part of all who love Christ. Satan is terribly in earnest to curse the world. His followers are intensely and personally active. The drunkard is perpetually treating and soliciting companionship in his wickedness. The gambler will lay his snares and work for days and weeks and cross land and sea to rope in his victim. The licentious ply their hellish influence by day and by night, openly and secretly, and labor with all the tirelessness of a fiend to captivate, seduce and destroy. The skeptic, the infidel and the scoffer,

are never backward to vaunt their hatred of religion, their opposition to Christ, and to scatter tracts and form societies, and loan books and to bear testimony against the truth. They boldly lift their ensign, and enthusiastically champion their cause. They are at it, and all at it, and always at it, seeking recruits to stand with them and hold aloft the black flag of rebellion against God Almighty.

Now, all this enthusiasm of wickedness must be met by a corresponding enthusiasm for righteousness. This zeal to destroy must be matched by zeal to save. This eager personal endeavor to lure souls to Hell must have pitted against it a similar personal endeavor to win souls for Christ and Heaven.

But this is only a partial statement of the case. The truth is that by no other possible means can the religious needs of the age be met. We have so much evil to contend with, so gigantic in its strength, so diffused in its influence, and so infectious and malignant in its effort that nothing short of the engagement, the energies, and the earnestness of the whole church can cope with it.

A single illustration will suffice. Twenty years ago I was a pastor in Allegheny, Pa. At that time, making the largest deductions needful for children too young to believe in Christ, there were one hundred thousand souls who, through choice, were without Christ and "without God in the world," and there were actually two hundred and twenty thousand souls in Pittsburg and Allegheny who were not indicated by the records as in any sense pious members and vitally connected with either Protestant or Catholic churches.

And to cope with the twenty-five hundred licensed saloons and all the aggregated wickedness which such cities represent, and to evangelize this vast population of more than two hundred thousand, there were all told only one hundred and fifty-five Protestant ministers.

It was apparent that though within easy reach of the open door of our sanctuaries, many scores of thousands avoided the ministers and the established means of grace. If such Christless masses in our cities ever hear the Gospel it must be carried to them by individual effort. But who must do it? The ministers? A single moment's consideration will make plain the impossibility of their doing it. No clerical force can be maintained that will be adequate for this stupendous work. Thousands of these people in the great cities are bitterly prejudiced against the clergy, which fact precludes their approaching them. Thousands upon thousands of these people are employed all day in shops and stores, and cannot then be seen; and the average city clergyman has church engagements four or five evenings in a week. Multitudes of these people sleep day times and work nights. A thousand obstacles intervene to prevent their being reached by a few professional men, whose hands are overloaded with work. No; the ordained. ministry are utterly inadequate to meet this necessity. It was never designed by God that they should. He never intended that the ministry should do the whole work of the churches, and relieve the lay-membership of the duty to make personal exertion to save men. And the condition of human society will never be such that they could do it if they would.

Plainly this multitudinous work must be divided up among a multitude of workers. Each Christian must make an honest effort to build the wall of Zion over against his own house, to labor for the conversion of those under his own roof and in his own neighborhood. Each Sabbath school teacher must lay it upon his heart to do a portion of the work. The gentleman in the office must have a deep and abiding interest in the, spiritual welfare of his clerks. The manufacturer must somehow give practical expression to a concern for the souls of his employes.

The Christian lady must have an eye to the cause of the Lord among her neighbors, and the Christian workman must live for Christ and talk for Christ among the companions of his toil. Each believer must feel

that he has feet to run, and hands to work, and lips to speak, and a heart to love, and a mind to think and plan for Jesus; must realize that he is an ambassador for Christ with a commission sent from Heaven to do something and be something for that Savior who has done so much and been so much for him.

Oh, we surely need today Christians like Luke to write for Jesus, and Mary Magdalenes to run with swift feet and tell the sorrowing the glad news that their Lord has risen, and seamstresses like Dorcas and Prisca able to teach others "the more perfect way," and mechanics like Harlan Page, each bringing a hundred souls to Christ. We still need teachers like Mary Lyon and servants like Onesimus, and warm-hearted women like the Bible Marys to serve their Lord.

We still need more men like Rufus and Lucius and Aquila and "Apelles, approved in Christ," and Christian sisters like Chloe and Tryphena and Tryphosa and "those women who labored with" Paul "in the Gospel." We sorely need a countless multitude of individuals who are always conscious of their individual responsibility to God, and who will not suffer their personality to be annihilated by church membership.

An English minister of fifty years ago, eminent for Christian usefulness, John Angell James, wrote on the very subject these burning words: "That is what we want. This we must have or we can never overtake the population of our country with the Gospel, and the means of grace. I say it again and again, and I say it with all possible emphasis, and would send it if I could with a trumpet blast over the land: Societies must not be a substitute for personal labors. Organization must not crush individualism. . . . With all members of churches walking in holy conversation and godliness, sending forth the light of a beautiful example, full of zeal, laboring for the salvation of their fellows, and inspired with the ambition, and animated with the hope of saving souls by personal effort, each studying what he could do, and doing what he could, what might not be looked for as the glorious result of such general activity, zeal and earnestness?

What an awakening would take place, what revivals would come on! What prayers would ascend, and what showers of blessings would come down in their season!

"When our churches exhibit such scenes as these, then will God's work go on in the earth." And we may add, then, too, our progress will be with a speed hitherto unparalleled in human history.

VI. Let us consider briefly how this want in modern Christian life is to be met. First, evidently we are to feel it. This we will certainly do when we seriously, earnestly, prayerfully study the needs of Christ's kingdom. Our hearts will soon begin to ache with sympathy, and each will be prompted to cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And He would have you do something which is your special work. Spurgeon has well said: "There is not a spider hanging on the king's wall but hath its errand; there is not a nettle that groweth in the corner of the churchyard but hath its purpose; there is not a single insect fluttering in the breeze but accomplisheth some Divine decree; and I will never have it that God created any man, especially any Christian man, to be a blank, and to be a nothing. He made you for an end. Find out what that end is; find out your niche and fill it. If it be ever so little, if it is only to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, do something in the great battle for God and truth."

You will doubtless feel your unworthiness and be ready to cry out, "O Lord, who is sufficient for these things?" This will drive, you to the mercy-seat for the oil of grace that your light may shine; for the holiness of heart that will give you a sanctifying influence; for the anointed lips and "the tongue of fire," that you may speak with an unction from the Holy One; and for a mind illuminated and taught by the Spirit that you may fitly hold forth the Word of life."

When you are thus moved and prayerful and in sympathy with the mission of Jesus, the means and the opportunities will open before you. When once your heart is alive with zeal and inflamed with a passion for souls, so that you will be impelled to determine, "I must do something to save souls; I must find means of doing good," you will be sure to find them. Your quickened mind will discern duties and detect needs; you will find some door of opportunity open, some needy soul for you to reach, some wayward spirit whom you can point to the Lamb of God.

VII. Lastly, consider what encouragements and motives incite us to personal work for Christ. Oh, if we could have just one worthy conception of our once crucified Lord of glory, we could never do enough for Him. We would be willing to imitate Paul, and entreat men night and day with tears to be reconciled to God.

Or, if we could have a faint appreciation of what it means to save one soul, what infinite anguish and degradation and woe it is saved from, and what end less growth in grace and inconceivable development in godlikeness, and eternal blessedness awaits it, our hearts would glow with the ardor of a seraph, and we could never be silent for pleading with men to be saved.

Or, again, if we could understand how disastrous mere negative piety may be to others it would make our hearts ache with grief over our past indolence, and we never again could be idle in God's vineyard. Would you stand with folded arms by a railroad track on which some villain had placed an obstruction, meekly protesting your innocence, while the express was sweeping down toward it at fearful speed? Oh, how contemptible and culpable would such do-nothing innocence be!

But, behold, the long, endless train of sin-laden humanity thundering along down to death! Have you no personal protest to make, no danger signal to lift, no warning to give? Shall none be entreated by you personally to believe and live?

Consider, also, the principles of your faith. You believe in a Divine Savior, who made an atonement for all the race. You believe that it is God's will that all should be saved from an endless Hell -- and that, too, by human instrumentality. You profess to believe all this, and dying men and women around you know it. Fellow Christians, we must either stop professing our belief in the stupendous realities of the eternal world, or we must act more as if they were true. Personal zeal and godly living on the part of Christians are the best possible antidotes for popular infidelity.

Then consider what immeasurable and everlasting good may result from personal endeavor. "Live today!" was the morning salutation of John Wesley to Sophia Cook, a young lady who lived in his house. Inspired by his words she went out to live for Jesus by teaching His Gospel to children. She suggested to Robert Raikes the founding of Sabbath schools and aided him, and that was the beginning of that institution that has brought such blessings to the race.

Talmage once said: "It seemed to be a matter of little importance that a woman, whose name has been forgotten, prayerfully dropped a tract in the way of a very bad man by the name of Richard Baxter, and it was the means of his salvation. In after days he wrote 'The Call to the Unconverted,' which was the means of bringing a multitude to God, among others Philip Doddridge. He wrote a book called 'The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,' which has brought thousands to God, among others the great Wilberforce. Wilberforce wrote a book called 'A Practical View of Christianity,' which was the means of bringing multitudes to Christ, among others Leigh Richmond. Leigh Richmond wrote a tract which has been the means of the conversion of multitudes. And that stream of influence started from the fact that one

Christian woman put a tract in the way of Richard Baxter -- the great tide rolling on and on and on forever."

A half a century ago in Illinois, an audience was asked to do something for Christ. Little Mary Paxton began by asking her father to come to Sunday school. He was forty years old; could not read; hated Christians; but he loved his little Mary, and to please her came to Sunday school. He was converted and became the greatest Sunday school apostle of our land. He is said to have established 1500 Sunday schools with seventy thousand pupils from which sprang a hundred Christian churches. What a countless multitude that little child was starting to Heaven!

In Chicago, a woman asked a poor Swede to attend a religious meeting. She went and was converted, brought her husband and he was converted; and led the entire crew of a lake vessel to Christ. Moody told us of a precious revival in which he was, that was begun in the sick-chamber of a poor invalid who was flat on his back. He was distressed at the thought of the peril of sinners around him. He invited the brethren of the church to come to his chamber and pray for a revival; but they were too dead to pray. He invited the sisters; a few came and prayed and prayed till the Lord suddenly came to his temple with a wonderful blessing. Oh, who is too feeble, too sick, too poor, too young, or too old to do something for Jesus! Who can tell what the harvest will be of one personal endeavor to win a soul? Who can be willing to remain effortless and fruitless, to go home to Heaven alone and empty-handed, having no sheaves for the heavenly garner, to stand before Jesus like the barren fig-tree bearing nothing but le aves?

Oh, that all believers might apprehend that for which they have been apprehended by Christ Jesus! Oh, that they might know that they are each called to be a co-worker with Jesus in efforts to save a dying world! John Smith, a mighty Wesleyan preacher of a past generation, once wrote of himself, "God has given me such a sight of the value of precious souls, that I cannot live if souls are not saved. O, give me souls or else I die." If such a passion for soul-saving could take possession of every disciple of our Lord the world over, so that in the factory and warehouse and store and shop, in the field and by the way, at the fireside and in the social gathering, in the city and in the country, on the land and on the sea, men and women would be eagerly planning and watching for an opportunity to win someone for Christ, then compassion for the lost and perishing would burn in each heart, prayers for their salvation would ascend from each lip, and messages of love and mercy would be spoken by every tongue.

Then, O then, would tarry no longer the coming of the kingdom, and the redemption of our ruined race, Ye ransomed followers of Jesus, heed this call: consecrate yourselves to this work: begin at once to personally, persistently seek the salvation of some soul.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aaron-hills/the-personal-element-of-religion/>

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