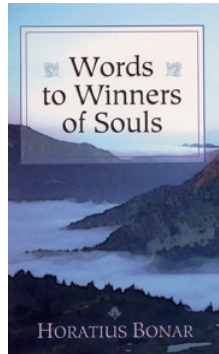


# SOME LESSONS I HAVE LEARNED IN THE HARD SCHOOL OF EVANGELISM

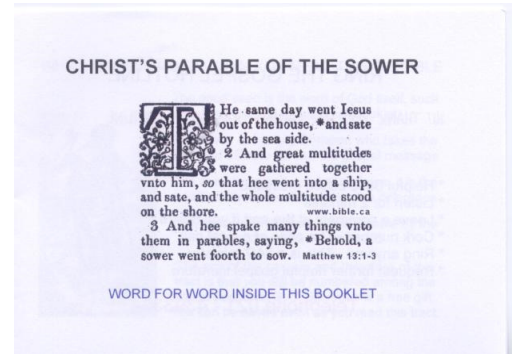
Written by Mr Colin Maxwell (Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster Missionary to the Republic of Ireland)



Youth Council Outreach open Air in Kinsale, Co. Cork. Summer 2005



Urged on to evangelism by men like Horatius Bonar



Literature evangelism  
The sower went out to sow

I make no claim to any originality. Just some lessons which I have learned. I may have read similar things elsewhere at some time or other...but I'm quoting no-one as I write these words. These are lessons which I have learned by blessed experience. Evangelism is a hard school...but I wouldn't forgo one lesson learned or desire to join another school on earth. No particular order as I write...

## **1) THE DEVIL ALWAYS MAKES OTHER FIELDS LOOK GREENER:**

The Devil is a very wily character indeed, but *"we are not ignorant of his devices"* (2 Corinthians 2:11). One of his favourite tricks is to make Christians feel as if they are missing out on something. In evangelism, he can sow discontentment in your heart by suggesting that someone else is in a better ministry than you. Sometimes I think that it must be really wonderful to be part, say, of the Every Home Crusade ministry in Belfast where you could be part of a vital team publishing gospel literature in foreign languages and seeing it sent to the far ends of the earth and reaching millions. I'm sure that I am right in so thinking, but if I were part of that vital printing team in Belfast, I could well be day dreaming about the evangelist in Cork who has the privilege of giving the same tracts out. The truth is: No matter where you are in the vineyard of God, the devil always wants you to be somewhere else and will try and get you thinking like that too.

## **2) NO MATTER HOW NOVEL YOUR APPROACH MAY BE...SINNERS WILL CATCH ON WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT AND STILL WILL NOT NATURALLY RECEIVE THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD:**

I have seen/used several different ways to propagate the gospel. I have seen men hold back what they were about and played heavily on the human interest/curiosity side of things. I am not altogether against such an approach. Sometimes the Trojan Horse approach works. Did not our Lord use it to some extent with the Samaritan woman in John 4? The big disadvantage comes when the "switch" is made and you to have to,

sooner or later, come out into the open. You mention words like "God" or "Jesus Christ" and when it is obvious that you are not actually taking these names in vain...the hitherto interested folk turn away. Fair enough some may stay on...but the point is this: There is no human way, ingenious or otherwise, that will induce a sinner to receive the things of the Spirit of God. Don't rely too heavily on your clever ideas. If I may slightly digress...I once witnessed an "old hand" at street preaching, use opening lines along the following: "I see I have gathered a bit of a crowd..." (He was using the sketch board) "...Let me be entirely up front here and say I am a Christian and I am preaching for decisions...I see I am losing some of you. It's funny! If I said that I was a Communist or a subversive planning to overthrow the State you would stay to listen, but I say that I am preaching the good news of Jesus Christ you decide to leave!" (Four young men returned to the crowd again and listen to the whole message) Like everything else, there are advantages and disadvantages in every strategy. This is why we should have more than one bow in our quiver.

### **3) SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO BE CONTENT JUST TO LEAVE A GOSPEL TRACT:**

Which is an arrow fired at a venture. Better to get a slice of the cake than no cake at all. If the door is closed...then there's not that much you can do about it. This is why I always try to have good tracts. (I have had to bin certain tracts.) We all know the many positive things about tracts. Being content with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5) applies to evangelism as well. If you have your address etc., on the tracts, those who are not very disposed towards you now can always find you later if when and if they want to talk about spiritual matters.

### **4) WHILE IT IS GOOD TO LISTEN...YOU CAN LISTEN TOO MUCH:**

I have let sinners have their say...and when they have said it, they have taken themselves off without listening the greatest news for themselves! Try to get a word in for the Lord Jesus too.

### **5) IT HELPS TO APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR OWN WORK:**

Without being big headed about it (see next lesson) realise that to be a witness for the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:8) is such a tremendous privilege and responsibility. The devil wants you to think it is such a mean work putting gospel leaflets through doors...or manning a bookstall etc. It's not. It is more important than being the Ambassador of a leading country to the Middle East. It is more important than any earthly job. Think of the worth of the work from the greatness of the reward offered to those who do it well (Matthew 25:21)

### **6) NO ONE IS IRREPLACEABLE:**

To balance up the last point. It is not you that is important...but the work that you are doing. God could always get someone else to do it. This is more than just a thought to keep us in our place. It is to encourage us when we are gone. The work will not die with us.

### **7) IT ENCOURAGES YOU TO SEE YOURSELF STANDING IN A LONG AND CHERISHED TRADITION OF FAITHFUL BIBLE EVANGELISTS:**

The writer is very conscious of his evangelical Protestant heritage. It greatly sustains me, under God that I am

simply replicating what others have done when I seek to reach the rest: The faithful OT prophets...the NT Apostles and disciples of the Book of Acts... the Protestant Reformers, Confessors and the great line of Evangelists etc. And why not? It is exactly the same Lord and the same gospel. I'm sure there were days they got pretty much cheesed off as well and thought about jacking it all in. But they kept going and if we keep going even if the going is rough, we stand in a goodly succession.

#### **8) IT ALWAYS SUSTAINS ON HARD DAYS TO PRAY TO GOD AND JUST TO SAY "HERE AM I":**

I have had to do this many a time. When there was no way through. When apathy reigned among the unsaved and I felt dead in my soul. Nothing is impossible with God. Even the King's heart is in the hand of the Lord and *"as the rivers of water: He turneth it withersoever He will"* (Proverbs 21:1). Unless the streets are absolutely deserted, you can always pray that God will give you an opening with one single soul. A good ten minute witness to just one soul about the freeness of salvation could do an ocean of good. And even if the streets are absolutely deserted...can God not bring someone out to their front door, just so that you can witness to them?

#### **9) DOOR TO DOOR EVANGELISM IS NEVER AS BAD ONCE YOU GET STARTED:**

You will see from these words that I am not a great door to door man. I usually start the doors with a great feeling of dread (compared with the buzz I have for tract work in the street or an open air). And yet I never fail after a couple of doors to feel the ice melt and actually start enjoying it. Sometimes you just have to go for it, despite initial feelings.