

personal witnessing. It is futile. We expect all young people to be engaged in personal work, in speaking one to one.

D. L. Moody was a great soul-winner. He had a rule: whether in the pulpit or not, we must preach the gospel to at least one person each day. One night he went to bed and suddenly remembered that he had not preached the gospel that day. What should he do? He got up and dressed. It was already midnight and there was nobody on the street. He could do nothing but try to find a policeman. He exhorted the policeman to believe in the Lord. It happened that the policeman he talked to was in great distress, so Moody was rebuffed by the policeman angrily, saying, "What sort of a person are you to do nothing but to persuade me to believe in Jesus at midnight?" Moody spoke a few more words and then hurried home. But, thank God, after a few days the policeman was saved.

I hope all able-bodied new believers will determine before God that they will seize every opportunity to find souls and to find at least one soul per day. If the whole church is preaching the gospel, who can stand against it?

May we lift up our torches and ignite others. May the testimony of the gospel be continued in us until the Lord shall come. Let not the testimony cease when our candles are burned out. May this candle of ours kindle another candle and still another candle. It is not too much to ask for thirty, forty, or fifty people a year from the Lord. Yearly let us bring souls to Christ. Thus shall the church be prosperous. There is much work before us. Let us all rise up and finish the task. 67

1

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

We have already mentioned to new believers the importance of witnessing. Now we will instruct them on how to lead people to the Lord. The lack of such knowledge will no doubt render much of their witnessing ineffective. After a person is saved, he must not only be exhorted to go out and witness but he also needs to be instructed on how to lead men to Christ. These two things he needs to learn and to do.

Let us look at the matter of how to lead people to the Lord from two sides: first, approaching God on behalf of sinners; and second, approaching sinners on behalf of God and the technique of how to lead people to the Lord.

Approach God on Behalf of Sinners

1. PREPARE A RECORD BOOK

The first thing to do is to prepare a notebook. Ask God to give the names of those whom He wishes to save into your heart. No doubt you will be burdened in your heart to pray for a few or even for several dozen people.

Do not compile this name list carelessly, for that would be a waste of time. The important thing is that before you write down the names, you first ask the Lord to put them into your heart. For the work to be done well, it must begin well. As you lay this matter before the Lord, He will give you the names of certain ones for whom to pray. The names of your family, your friends, your colleagues, your schoolmates, and your acquaintances will

spontaneously come to your heart. You hope that these people will soon be saved.

Enter these names in the record book according to the number of their occurrence. Under a date column write the date you started to pray for a certain person, and over on the other side keep a blank to be filled in with the time when that particular person is saved. Once a name is entered, it cannot be taken away unless the person either is saved or passes away. As long as the name is there, you should pray for him until he is saved.

So your record book should have the following items: first item is the number; second, the date (the day you start to pray); third, the name; and fourth, another date (the day the person is saved or passes away). I remember a brother prayed for one name in his book for eighteen years before that person was saved. Many in your book may get saved within one year; some may be saved in three months; one or two may be especially difficult—but let there be no escape.

2. PRAYER IS THE BASIC WORK IN SAVING SOULS

Why should you prepare such a record book? Because there is a basic principle in the saving of souls, and that is, before you speak to a person you must first pray to God. First ask the Lord and then speak to him. It is absolutely necessary for you to speak to God on behalf of the person to whom you will later speak. If you speak to him first, you will not be able to accomplish anything.

In a certain place I saw two responsible brothers who were very zealous in leading men to the Lord. But in my contact with them, I knew instantly that something was basically wrong. They did not pray for those whom they wished to win for Christ. An interest in men void of a burden before God is simply inadequate and is therefore ineffective. One must first have a burden before God and then labor among men.

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

Hence, the first thing to do is to ask God for a few souls. “All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me” (John 6:37), said the Lord Jesus. And we also remember how God added to the church day by day those that were saved (Acts 2:47). We must ask God for souls. We need to pray: “O God, give souls to the Lord Jesus, add people to the church.” People are given by the asking. Human hearts are so subtle that they are not easily turned. For this reason, we must pray faithfully for a person before we speak fully to him. How important is prayer. Pray by name for those people whom you wish to lead to Christ, believe that God will save them, and then lead them to the Lord.

Whosoever is wise in leading men to Christ is skillful in the art of prayer. If one has difficulty having his prayer answered, he will have difficulty going out and witnessing for the Lord. May new believers see that the way lies in praying before witnessing. All who are wise in leading people to the Lord are also effectual in prayer.

3. THE GREATEST HINDRANCE TO PRAYER IS SIN

Special attention should be paid by new believers to reject all known sins. We must learn to live a holy life before God. If anyone is lax in the matter of sin, his prayer will definitely be hindered. Sin is a big problem. Many cannot pray because they tolerate sin in their lives. Sin will not only obstruct our prayers, it will also wreck our conscience.

The effects of sin are two-sided: objectively, there is an effect Godward; subjectively, there is an effect usward.

Objectively, sin obstructs God’s grace and God’s answer. “Behold, Jehovah’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Is. 59:1-2). God’s mercy and grace is the 71 72 The Good Confession

greatest force in the world. Nothing can stand against it except sin. It is said in the Psalms, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps. 66:18). If a person neglects dealing with sin, there will be an obstruction between him and God. Any unconfessed sin, any sin which is not put under the blood, becomes a great hindrance before God—it hinders prayer from being answered. This is the objective effect of sin.

Subjectively, sin damages a man’s conscience. Whenever a person sins, his conscience becomes weakened and depressed irrespective of how hard he tries to convince himself, of how much he reads the Bible, and of how desperately he holds on to the promises in the Bible and the acceptable grace of God. His conscience is like a ship (see 1 Tim. 1:19). It is all right for a ship to be old, but it cannot be wrecked. It is all right for a ship to be small, but it cannot afford to be broken. In like manner, a conscience must not be wrecked. If the conscience lacks peace, there will be a hindrance in the person and before God.

I often think of the relationship between faith and conscience. Faith is like the cargo and conscience is like the ship. The cargo is in the ship. If the ship is wrecked, the cargo will fall out. When conscience is strong, faith is also strong; but when conscience is wrecked, faith leaks out. God’s heart is greater than ours; if we condemn ourselves, how much more will God condemn us. This is what the apostle John tells us (1 John 3:20).

New believers ought to see that the sin question must be solved if they desire to be skillful in prayer. Thus they should note especially the preciousness of the blood. They have lived in sin so long that they will not be able to be completely freed from sin if they are even slightly lenient toward it. They need to confess their sins one by one before God, put them one after another under the blood, reject each one of them, and be freed of them. Thus shall their conscience be restored. By the cleansing of the blood, the conscience is instantly

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

restored. With the washing of the blood, conscience no longer accuses and one may naturally see God's face. Never let yourself fall into the place whereby you become weak before God, for you will not then be able to intercede for others. Thus this question of sin is the first thing to which you must attend daily. Deal well with sin; then you can pray well before God and lead people to Christ. If you daily remember people before the Lord with faith, you will soon win them to Christ.

This is a big test. It will test out your spiritual condition before God. If your spiritual condition is normal and right, you will gain the people on your prayer list one by one. Pray for them with perseverance. After a few days, half a month or a month, one or two may get saved; and so on. If after three or four months, your prayers are still unanswered, something must be wrong with your prayer. So you see that prayer is your greatest test. It reveals whether you are sick before God. If so, that is why your prayer remains unanswered. If you are well before God, you will see one or two saved after a reasonable period of time.

4. PRAY IN FAITH

Once believers have dealt thoroughly with their sins and maintained a strong conscience before God, they need to be further helped to see the importance of faith.

Actually the prayer life of new believers is mainly involved with conscience and faith. Though prayer is rather profound, to new believers it is only a matter of conscience and faith. If their conscience before God is without offense, their faith can easily be strong. And if their faith is sufficiently strong, their prayer will easily be answered. Therefore it is necessary for them to have faith.

What is faith? It is not doubting in prayer. It is God who constrains us to pray. It is God who promises that we may pray to ⁷³ ⁷⁴ The Good Confession

families who liked to have guests. Two sisters had such a home, and they opened their house to receive guests. These guests were all high-class people. Sometimes there were twenty or thirty staying with them. They observed that their guests were all worldly people who were fashionably dressed. When these guests sat around the table, their conversation usually touched upon worldly things and they often joked a lot. The two sisters wanted to correct this condition, but how? They were greatly outnumbered since there were only two of them. After deliberation, they decided to sit at the two ends of the room and join their hearts in praying over every one of their guests.

During the first evening after supper, they all retired to the sitting room. The two sisters took up their positions and started to pray, one praying from one end and the other praying from the other end until they had finished praying for all. Because of their silent prayers, the guests found themselves unable to jest and joke and talk. They wondered why. That night one person was saved, and the second night another was saved. This went on until all were saved.

Remember, prayer is indispensable. Those two sisters were very wise. Instead of sitting among their guests and being influenced by them, they sat at the two ends of the room and encircled their guests with prayers so that none might escape but all be saved.

Approach Sinners on Behalf of God

It is not enough just to pray for sinners and to approach God on behalf of sinners. We must also approach sinners on behalf of God. We need to tell them what God is like. Many people dare to speak to God but have no courage to speak to men. Young people should be trained to be bold to speak to others. They must not only pray but also seek opportunities to talk.

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

In talking with people, there are a few things which should be especially observed.

1. NEVER ARGUE UNNECESSARILY

In speaking to people, we need a little technique. First of all, we must not enter into unnecessary arguments. This does not mean that we should never argue, because in Acts we find several instances where they argued; even the apostle Paul argued. If you have to argue, you argue with one person for the benefit of a third person listening in. But for the one whom you wish to win to Christ, usually it is better if you do not argue. Do not argue with him nor argue for him to hear. Why? Because argument may drive people away instead of drawing them in. You need to show a gentle spirit; otherwise people will flee from you.

Many think that argument may move a person's heart. But this is not true. Argument at most only brings people's minds into subjection. Therefore, it is better to speak less words which come from the mind and rather witness more. Tell people of how you have experienced joy and peace and rest after you believed in the Lord Jesus. These are facts that no one can argue with.

2. HOLD ON TO FACTS

Another method in leading people to the Lord is to use fact, not doctrine, while talking. It is not because of the reasonableness of the doctrine that people come into faith. Many see the logic of the doctrine but still do not believe.

Often it is the simple who can save souls. Those who preach well on doctrine may correct people's minds but fail to save souls. The one aim is to save people, not to correct their minds. What is the use in having their minds corrected but leaving them unsaved? 79 80 The Good Confession

I remember once there was an old man. He attended the church meetings regularly, but he was not saved. Though he was unsaved, yet he considered going to church a good habit. So he attended regularly and wanted his whole family to go with him. Often after the meetings he would go home and get into a bad temper. The whole family was afraid of him.

One day his married daughter came to see him. This daughter belonged to the Lord. When she came to visit, she brought her four-year-old girl with her. This grandfather naturally took his little granddaughter along to the church. After the service as they walked out, the little granddaughter looked at her grandfather and felt that he did not look like a believer in the Lord Jesus. So on the way she asked him whether he believed in Jesus. The old grandfather retorted that a child should not talk. After a few steps, the child again said to him, "To me you do not look like a believer in Jesus." This old man once again replied, "A little child is not allowed to speak." After a while, the girl spoke again, "Why do you not believe in Jesus?" This time the old man was caught. He who was much feared by others was brought to the Lord through these simple questions.

Remember, therefore, it is not a matter of preaching. This little child had a keener eye than many people. She noticed that though her grandfather went to church he was different. She said, "You do not look like a believer," and then asked, "Why do you not believe in the Lord Jesus?" Thus she led him to Christ.

In preaching the gospel or witnessing for Christ, do not be afraid to be foolish. The best brain can hardly save people. I have yet to see a good brain saving souls, for as one uses his brain he always turns to doctrine. He states the doctrine clearly but this is not the way required by the gospel. You need to know God's way. If a person fishes with a straight hook, he will never get a fish. The fishhook must be barbed so as to hook the fish. This is what new believers ought to learn.

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

3. MAINTAIN A SINCERE AND EARNEST ATTITUDE

In witnessing, our attitude must be sincere and earnest, not given to frivolity. We must not argue, but only tell the facts of what we have experienced before God. If we stand in this position, we will be able to lead many to the Lord. Do not try to have a big brain; just stress facts. We may joke about other matters but in this one thing we must be sincere.

I once saw a person who wished to lead people to Christ. He was willing to pray, but his attitude was wrong. As he talked of the Lord, he joked and jested a long. These two are incompatible. Through frivolity he lost whatever spiritual power he might have had. He had no way to lead people to Christ. In witnessing, our attitude must be sincere. We need to impress upon others that this is a most serious matter.

4. ASK GOD FOR OPPORTUNITIES

We should pray that God will give us opportunities to speak with people. If we pray, we will be given opportunities.

I recall a sister who led a small Bible class. She gathered many sales girls who were unbelievers and gave them instruction from the Bible once a week. She did this for a time but with no visible result. Then she noticed among the girls one who was fashionably dressed. This particular girl was proud and had no heart for spiritual things. So the sister started to pray for that girl. After many days she invited the girl to come to her home and have tea with her. The girl expected to have a nice social visit, and so she went. But as soon as they sat down, the sister began to persuade her to believe. The girl answered, "I cannot believe for I love playing cards, I love the theater, I love the world. I am not willing to incur the loss of these things, so I cannot believe in the Lord Jesus." The sister acknowledged that such would be the case if one believed in the Lord Jesus; one would have 81 82 The Good Confession

to give up cards, the theater, and the pleasures of this world. The girl said, "The cost is too much; I cannot afford to pay it." She was asked by the sister to go home and reconsider.

Returning home she knelt down to pray. After prayer, she decided to follow the Lord Jesus. She was suddenly transformed. She did not know why, but her heart was turned. Her dress and her make-up also underwent a change. A month later the manager of her floor called her to his office and congratulated her on her change. She was surprised. So the manager told her that they had had a meeting in which a decision had been reached that they would fire her if she continued to be as she used to be for another week. She had been so arrogant, disrespectful to customers, overly adorned, and frivolous that she had thought only of herself, not of the business of the firm. But strangely, within that week she had changed. He asked if he might know the reason. The girl testified that she had accepted the Lord Jesus. Within a year over a hundred salesgirls were brought by her, one after another, to the Lord.

Some seem to be difficult to talk with. But if you pray for them, you will be given opportunities to speak to them and they will be changed. Look at the sister referred to above. She was at first afraid to talk to that girl for the latter was so arrogant in her attitude and so worldly in her attire. The Lord, however, gave the sister a burden to pray. Then one day the Lord gave her courage to speak to the girl.

Therefore, we must learn to pray and also to speak. Many dare not open their mouths to speak of the Lord Jesus to their friends and relatives. Maybe opportunities are waiting for you but you have let these opportunities slip by because you are afraid.

5. SEEK OUT PEOPLE OF THE SAME CATEGORY

According to our past experience, it is better for people to seek and save those in the same category. This is a common rule. Nurses

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

can work among nurses, doctors among doctors, patients among patients, civil servants among civil servants, students among students. Work on those who are nearest to you. You do not need to start with open-air meetings, but with your family and acquaintances. It is natural for doctors to work on their patients, teachers on their students, employers on their employees, masters on their servants.

I remember there were twelve houses in a certain lane in Shanghai. One maidservant got saved. She decided to start with the first house on the right. Soon the maid of that house on the right was saved, and then the maid of the second house on the right got saved, and so on. By the time I heard of it, six maidservants had already been saved.

Let the children work among the children. It is most convenient to work by this rule of staying within the same category. Let the men seek out the men, and the women, women. I do not say that it must be so, but from our past experience it does seem to be the most effective.

New believers should know to what category they belong, then seek out those of the same category. With the exception of people being your friends or relatives or neighbors, this rule usually is both effective and conveniently applicable.

I do not say there are no exceptions, for there are some. Our Lord Jesus Himself gave us some exceptional examples. Nonetheless, this rule is generally preferable. For a miner to preach in a college is exceptional. Though the Lord does sometimes do exceptional things, yet He cannot be expected to do such things every day. For example, for a very learned person to talk to the laborers at the pier is not quite suitable. But if a few longshoremen are saved and they go out to save the rest, it seems to me to be a more appropriate and easier way.

6. BRING PEOPLE TO GOD DAILY THROUGH PRAYERS 83 84 The Good Confession

There will never be a time when there is no one to pray for. You can pray for your fellow students, your colleagues, your fellow nurses or doctors, and your fellow employees. Ask God to put especially one or two of them upon your heart. When He puts a person in your heart, write his name in your book and pray daily for him.

After you have begun to pray for a soul, you should also talk to him. Tell him of the grace of the Lord to you. This is something he cannot resist or forget.

7. IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON

Finally, I wish to mention that you are not forbidden to speak to those for whom you have not prayed before. There will be some to whom you will speak when you meet them for the first time. Seize every opportunity; speak both in season and out of season, for you do not know who will slip away. You must open your mouth regularly even as you should pray always. Pray for those with names and pray for many without names. Pray that the Lord will save sinners. Whenever you meet a sinner by chance, if the Spirit of God moves you, speak to him.

I recall a story about a British naval officer who attended a race in London. Crowds of people were there watching the race. It so happened that a middle-aged noble lady was watching by his side. He wondered in his heart if this lady knew the Savior. So he turned to her and said: "Pardon me. I have an important question to ask you—do you know my Savior?" The lady was stunned and surprised at such a question. He explained to her that the Lord Jesus was his Savior and he encouraged her to accept Him. The lady expressed her willingness to receive the Lord Jesus. They knelt down to pray and the lady was soundly saved.

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

Let me tell you, if we are a little careless, souls will slip away from us. May God's fishermen today cast such a fine net that no fish will slip away.

Practice is Required

Each time you try to lead a sinner to the Lord, you must treat it as a case to be studied. You must be like a medical doctor who studies each and every case. You cannot give a prescription indiscriminately. Likewise, in dealings with souls you have to study them as cases. Acknowledge each failure and find out the reason for each success.

No one in the world can be an accountant, a teacher, a doctor, a nurse, or even a sedan-chair bearer without proper training. Likewise, how can we be soul-winners without first learning how to lead people to the Lord? There are many who have become rather skillful in winning souls. Such ones study each case carefully every time.

We should always inquire why a certain one accepted the Lord. Was there anything we said that made him believe? Or why did another one seem to listen so well and yet slip away afterwards? Was it because we did not use the right bait? Do not blame others for all the difficulties; rather look into yourself for the problem, as all who are skillful in winning souls usually do. If people are not saved, something must be wrong in us. We cannot sit by the seashore and wonder why the fish do not leap into the boat. We need to spend time searching out the reason why people are not saved. There is a technique in soul-winning. And this technique is learned by doing. We can learn from our failures as well as from our successes.

I can testify before you today that if you really put yourselves to the task, you will discover it is not too difficult at all. You may win many without any difficulty. Actually there are only a few types of people in the world. For each type of person, you need to have a 85 86 The Good Confession

special kind of word in order to get them saved. If you use the wrong approach, you will only cause trouble.

Once we have learned to deal with the different types of people, we will be able to deal with anyone. We will even know how to deal with those whom we meet by chance. As soon as we have an opportunity to witness for Christ, we will quickly discover what type of person he is. We will then know what approach we should use. With the right word, the man will be saved. In short, we acknowledge the truthfulness of the word that it is the wise who win souls.

Distributing Tracts

1. TRACT DISTRIBUTION HAS NO TIME LIMITATIONS

During the past two or three hundred years, God has especially used gospel tracts to save people. Tracts have several special advantages. One advantage is that whereas in speaking there is the limitation of time as well as the restriction of people—that is, you cannot speak twenty-four hours a day nor will people always be conveniently present to hear you—with tracts there is no such limitation or restriction. You may distribute tracts at any time, and people can read them at their convenience. Some people may not have the time to go to meetings and listen to the preaching of the gospel, but they can always be given a tract to read.

2. TRACTS MAY PRESENT THE GOSPEL FULLY

Often people have the zeal to witness for the Lord but are unable to present the gospel fully and completely. A good way for new believers is to choose some good gospel tracts and distribute them. This will help you to accomplish what you yourself cannot do.

3. TRACTS ARE UNAFFECTED BY PEOPLE

HOW TO LEAD PEOPLE TO CHRIST

In talking to people, sometimes we are unable to present the gospel as fully or seriously as it should be. We are easily affected by human considerations and feelings. With tracts there is no such problem. They say what is to be said irrespective of who is reading them. When we preach the gospel, we cannot avoid being influenced by people, but preaching by tracts is absolutely above such influence. So new believers should start to sow with tracts.

4. TRACTS MAY BE SCATTERED EVERYWHERE

Another advantage of tracts is that they may be scattered everywhere. As the Old Testament says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecc. 11: 1). It would consume lots of time to speak to three, five, ten people. But when I first believed in the Lord, I distributed daily an average of one to three thousand tracts. Take a pile of tracts with you when you go out. Give one to whomever you meet. This is like sowing upon the face of the waters. If only one person is saved through those one thousand distributed tracts, it is really worthwhile.

5. TRACTS ARE REALLY USED BY GOD TO SAVE PEOPLE

God sometimes uses tracts in amazing ways to save people. I remember once a man threw away a tract on the road. Another man came by. One nail in his shoe happened to stick out and caused pain to his foot. He was looking for some paper to pad the inside of his shoe. He picked up the tract and put it in his shoe. While his shoe was being repaired afterwards, he read the tract and was saved. Many wonderful stories like this can be told of how tracts have been used to save souls.

6. PRAY FAITHFULLY AND WORK SINGLE-MINDEDLY

Whenever new believers are free, they should put tracts in their pockets and distribute them. In doing this work of leading people to

Christ, we need to pray faithfully and undertake the task with singleness of heart. As we distribute, we may add a word or two or we may say nothing. But we do expect to see people

1

come to the Lord.

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

The Promise of God

Most things have their basic unit and the unit for salvation is the household. We find in the Bible that God gives many promises in regard to His dealings with men. If we know these promises, we will be greatly benefited; otherwise, we will suffer loss. The promise which God gives concerning salvation takes a household, not an individual, as the basic unit. New believers should be reminded of this, for it will solve many problems and give them great benefit.

The Unit of Salvation

When the Bible speaks of eternal life, it always takes an individual as the unit; never does it take a household as the unit. But when it deals with salvation, it actually takes the household instead of the individual. We must see that the unit of salvation is the household while that of eternal life is the individual.

We wish to spend some time in searching a number of Scripture verses so as to convince ourselves of the fact that salvation is for the household. Then we will be able to come to God and plead for households according to His Word.

Our Course

We do hope that in the future we will not need to spend lots of time trying to save the children born in our midst, trying to bring our second generation back from the world. All who are born into our homes according to the flesh should also be born into our homes according to the Spirit. We should not lose them year after year and

33

90 The Good Confession

then have to save them back afterwards. It is not enough for us just to bring them into the world; we must also bring them to the Lord.

If brothers and sisters are convinced of this, we will have as many children saved as are born to us. The Lord has given them to us. How can we allow them to go away without being saved? Must we save them back from the world? We will waste a great deal of time if we let all these small fish go back to the sea and try to catch them afterwards. No, these small fish must stay with the larger ones. Whether or not the church has a second generation depends largely on whether or not our children belong to the Lord.

I do desire that brothers and sisters may see the significance of this matter. If we lose those born to us, very soon we will not have a second generation. But if generation after generation continues, a long with new additions from outside, then the church will become exceedingly strong.

The basic principle of the Bible is that God's salvation is for the household. Let us now examine the proofs in both the Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament Examples

1. THE WHOLE HOUSE ENTERED THE ARK

“And Jehovah said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark” (Gen. 7:1).

“While the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water” (1 Pet. 3:20b).

The ark was not for one person; it was for the whole house. The Bible affirms that the man Noah was righteous before God, but now here does it record that Noah's sons and daughters-in-law were

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

righteous. Noah alone was referred to as a righteous man. Yet when God prepared His salvation for Noah, He commanded all his house to enter into the ark. The ark used the household instead of an individual as its unit.

A new believer should bring all his house to the ark. You may pray: “Lord, I have trusted in You. Now I ask You to bring my whole house in because You have said that all my house may come in.” God will respect your faith and bring in your whole house.

2. A WHOLE HOUSE WAS CIRCUMCISED

“And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner that is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:12-13).

God called Abraham and covenanted with him to make him and his house His own people. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. All who were circumcised belonged to God; all who were not circumcised were not of God. God commanded Abraham to have his whole house circumcised—those who were born in his house as well as those who were bought with his money. So the promise regarding circumcision was not given to Abraham alone; it was given to the house of Abraham. Circumcision had the household as its unit of operation. God’s promise was for the whole house of Abraham, not just for Abraham himself.

3. A PASCHAL LAMB FOR EACH HOUSE

“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household: . . . And 91 92 The Good Confession

they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it” (Ex. 12:3, 7).

The paschal lamb was definitely for the household, not for an individual. Thus we are shown how important is the household in the sight of God. The lamb was slain not for one person but for the whole house, and its blood was put on the door that the household might be preserved. The angel, the destroyer, would pass over the house which had the blood on the door.

How marvelous that the salvation which the Lord Jesus Christ has prepared is like the paschal lamb for the whole house. It is for the household to eat the lamb and to apply the blood. The whole family together receives the salvation of the Lord.

4. THE PRIESTHOOD IS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD

The priesthood which God promised was also for the household. “And Jehovah said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy fathers’ house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood” (Num. 18:1).

“And this is thine: the wave-offering of their gift, even all the wave-offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, as a portion for ever; every one that is clean in thy house shall eat thereof” (Num. 18:11). God gave all the wave-offerings of the people to the house of Aaron, not just to Aaron himself, for the whole household was accepted by God. The house of Aaron, not Aaron alone, was appointed to be priests. The priesthood was within the house.

5. A HOUSEHOLD SAVED UNDER A SCARLET CORD

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

“And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we shall be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him” (Josh. 2:19).

“And the city shall be devoted, even it and all that is therein, to Jehovah: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent” (Josh. 6:17).

In the case of Rahab the harlot, the whole house was also saved. Why? Because she hid the messengers. God gave her a sign—she must bind the scarlet cord on her window; all who were in the house would then be spared from slaughter. The rest of the inhabitants of Jericho were all killed. Salvation was in the scarlet cord, but this salvation saved not only Rahab but also her house.

So the scope of salvation is pretty clear—it is the household. In chapter two of Joshua, we see the promise; in chapter six, the practice. As the promise was, so was the practice. The whole house of Rahab was therefore saved.

6. BLESSING UPON THE HOUSE

“And the ark of Jehovah remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and Jehovah blessed Obed-edom, and all his house” (2 Sam. 6:11).

The blessing of Jehovah in the Old Testament was also for the household. As the ark remained in the house of Obed-edom, the Lord blessed him and all his house. The unit for blessing is the house, not the individual.

I would like to use this opportunity to mention that not just in this matter of salvation, but in many things in both the Old and the New 93 94 The Good Confession

Testaments the household is taken as the basic unit. God's children, especially the heads of families, should notice that God's dealing with men is on the unit of the house. If you are ignorant of this principle, there is much that you will miss. As head of the family, you should lay hold of this principle and pray: "Lord, You have told me that You are not only dealing with me but with my house as well. Therefore, I ask You to save my household."

Not only the head of the family can claim this promise; other members of the house can also lay hold of the father's house and claim the promise. Rahab was not head of the family; yet it was she who laid hold of God and thus the whole house was saved through her. If you are the head of the family, good, because as head you can represent the family in claiming the promise. However, you who are not the head of the family can also rise up in faith and claim God's promise, as Rahab did, for the whole house: "Lord, I pray that You will lead my whole house to Yourself that they may be blessed by You."

7. REJOICE WITH THE HOUSEHOLD

"And there ye shall eat before Jehovah your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee" (Deut. 12:7).

"And thou shalt bestow the money for whatsoever thy soul desireth, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul asketh of thee; and thou shalt eat there before Jehovah thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household" (Deut. 14:26).

Do you see how God told the Israelites they were to live before Him? Each household was to eat and drink and rejoice before God. In other words, the blessing is for the house, not for the individuals.

You and your household should rejoice together in the blessing of the Lord.

New Testament Examples

1. THE HOUSE OF ZACCHAEUS

What about Zacchaeus? “And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham” (Lk. 19: 9). How wonderful it is that the New Testament proclaims the same principle. We usually think of salvation as coming to the individual. Perhaps many have preached that way. But the Lord declares that “salvation has come to this house.”

When you go out to preach the gospel, you should pay attention to household salvation. Do not expect only individuals to be saved. If you really believe and truly expect more, your work will undergo a great change. We want whole houses to be converted. Much depends on your faith and expectation. Should you expect them to come one by one, they will come one by one. But if you believe in their coming house by house, you will get them house after house. The scope of God’s salvation is the house; let us not reduce that scope.

2. THE HOUSE OF THE NOBLEMAN

“So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house” (John 4:53). He who was healed was only one person, the nobleman’s son; but the Bible records that the nobleman and his whole house believed in the Lord. Although the son alone received grace directly, nonetheless, the whole house turned to the Lord. Let our request and expectation before God also produce such abundant fruit.

3. THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS 95 96 The Good Confession

“A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2).

“Who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house” (Acts 11:14). Cornelius invited his relatives and friends to hear Peter.

As Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, and all who were gathered in his house were saved. This is a tremendous demonstration that God deals with households rather than just with individuals.

4. THE HOUSE OF LYDIA

“And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Acts 16:15). The apostles preached the gospel to the household of Lydia and they believed and were baptized.

5. THE HOUSE OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house” (Acts 16:31). This is one of the most famous Bible verses in Christianity.

Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, even you and your house. I do not think we can dispute this statement. God’s Word does not say, Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall have eternal life, you and your house. It says, Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your house.

In both the Old and the New Testaments, God deals with men by the household unit. This is the smallest unit; let us not further reduce

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

it. If anyone believes in the Lord Jesus, his whole household shall be saved. This, indeed, is marvelous. I do not know the reason, but that is what the Lord has said.

The church at Philippi began with this wonderful promise. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Was this promise fulfilled? "And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God" (16:34). How very beautiful is the picture! In the beginning the promise was given to the jailor and he alone heard it. But he brought his whole family over to hear Paul and so they all were baptized. Then he took Paul and Silas to his house and set food before them. He with all his household rejoiced greatly, for they all believed in God. So this promise of "believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" is not difficult to fulfill after all. The apostles gave the jailor the promise; consequently the whole household was saved.

The apostles never told the jailor anything else. For example, they didn't say, "You believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. Then after a couple of days have gone by we will tell you some more. Now you just be at rest. Slowly you should testify to your household that they may gradually come to have faith and be saved. We can assure you that this household will doubtless sooner or later all be saved."

Let me ask you: which is easier, to save individuals or to save households? Of course we do not mean that we should not seek souls one by one. But the apostles always took in households. Let us, then, not lose this privilege of bringing households to the Lord.

Let the household be the object of our labor. If we aim at the household, we shall gain the household; if we aim at individuals, we will gain only individuals. God will do things according to our faith. 97 98 The Good Confession

If we know God's way of dealing with men, we shall not suffer loss. God takes the household as His unit of operation. In gaining one person, you gain the whole house irrespective of the size of the household. May our hearts be opened by God so that we may take this stand. Let us encourage brothers and sisters to lead whole households to the Lord.

6. THE HOUSE OF CRISPUS

“And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord with all his house; . . . and were baptized” (Acts 18:8).

We have instances in the Bible of the whole house believing in the Lord and instances of individuals believing in Him. But believing by the household in those days far exceeded what we see today. God's grace can easily come to a whole household. Crispus and all his house believed in the Lord and were baptized.

7. THE PROMISE IS TO YOU AND TO YOUR CHILDREN

We have already seen how the door of the gospel was opened to the Gentiles in the salvation of the house of Cornelius. Now let us turn back to look again at the situation at Pentecost.

“For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him” (Acts 2:39).

The promise given at Pentecost is that man's sin may be forgiven and he may receive the Holy Spirit. This promise is to your children as well as to you. It is therefore especially important for heads of families to lay hold of this promise, saying, “To us and to our children is this promise given. It is not for us exclusively, for our children may possess it together with us.”

8. PEACE TO THE HOUSE

“And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again” (Lk. 10:5-6).

When one is sent out to preach the gospel, he should enter into a house saying, “Peace be to this house.” If anyone in the house is worthy of peace, this blessing will be upon the whole house. Again, God’s peace is not just for an individual but for the house. May young believers seize upon this blessed promise. Thank God, peace also comes upon house after house.

9. THE HOUSE OF STEPHANAS

“And I baptized also the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor. 1:16). Paul baptized every member of the house of Stephanas for they all believed in the Lord.

10. THE HOUSE OF ONESIPHORUS

“Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the house of Onesiphorus” (2 Tim. 4:19).

“The Lord grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus: for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Tim. 1:16).

This family took care of Paul and was not ashamed of his chain. You will notice that it was not just one member but the whole house that helped Paul.

I trust from the few chosen Scripture passages (I have not time to mention all the instances in the Old and New Testaments) we can at least be assured that the unit of God’s dealing is the house. Especially in the matter of salvation, God takes the house as the unit of His grace. 99 100
The Good Confession

God's Unit of Punishment

Here we will find some Bible verses which show that the unit of God's punishment is also the household. As men rebelled against God, God reacted in wrath against their houses. Thus not only peace and joy and salvation are for the household, punishment is also for the household. As the blessing of God comes to the house, likewise does the punishment of God come to the house. If God can punish the house for the sake of one member, surely He can bless the house also for one person. As woe comes to the family through one man, so blessing and salvation come to the house by one member. In view of this, a new believer should learn to stand up for his house. "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15b).

1. THE HOUSE OF PHARAOH

"And Jehovah plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife" (Gen. 12: 17). For the sin of one man, Pharaoh, the Lord plagued him and his house. If God's woe comes to the household, may we not expect His blessing to come to the household too? We are not destined to be plagued; rather are we to be people of His grace.

2. THE HOUSE OF ABIMELECH

"For Jehovah had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife" (Gen. 20: 18). All the wombs, not just one or two wombs of the house of Abimelech, were closed.

3. THE HOUSE OF DAVID

"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will raise up evil

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun” (2 Sam. 12:10-11).

After David had sinned, the chastisement of God came upon his house, even that the sword would not depart from his house. David alone sinned, but David's house received God's judgment. From God's viewpoint, one's house is closely related to one's self and they become one unit. God divides the people on earth into houses, not into individuals. Therefore we must come to God by the household.

4. THE HOUSE OF JEROBOAM

“And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth” (1 Kings 13:34). As a result of his setting up idols, God cut off his whole house.

“Moreover Jehovah will raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now” (14:14). Why did God cut off the house of Jeroboam? We can only say that it was because the house is a unit before God.

5. THE HOUSE OF BAASHA

“Behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house; and I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat” (1 Kings 16:3). God cut off the house of Baasha in the same way as He cut off the house of Jeroboam, for the unit of God's dealing is the house.

6. THE HOUSE OF AHAB

I think one of the most famous houses in the book of Kings is the house of Ahab. “And I will make thy house like the house of 101 102 The Good Confession

Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and hast made Israel to sin” (1 Kings 21:22). Why did God deal with the house of Ahab? Because Ahab provoked God. Ahab was one of the worst kings in the Old Testament. He received the same treatment from God as the house of Jeroboam and the house of Baasha.

7. THE HOUSES OF DATHAN AND ABIRAM

“And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben; how the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel” (Deut. 11:6). The word “household” in Hebrew is the same word for “house.” Dathan and Abiram sinned against God; the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up them and their households.

I am convinced that the Bible in both the Old and the New Testaments and both positively and negatively, affirms the house as the unit of God’s dealing. Brethren, do you think this is true? If so, let us live carefully before God because one person can affect the whole house.

Heads of the Families

I would like to speak specially to heads of families. To the children, our words must not be too weighty. But all the responsible ones in the Bible, with the probable exception of Lydia, are heads of houses. As heads of families, they are responsible before God in a special way. What is this special responsibility? It is that they bring their households to serve the Lord.

In the capacity of head of a household, I can claim God’s promise for the whole house. I may declare that my house will believe in the

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION

Lord. Whether the children have believed or not does not alter this decision, for I, not they, am responsible for the house. I should quote the words of Joshua before God and my house, "But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15). I choose for the family. Hereafter the world has to acknowledge that this is a Christian family, a family which believes in the Lord.

Stand on this decision and speak in faith. Do not compromise your position. Bring your wife and your children to the same position. Lay hold of this: I am head of the family; my house shall believe in God; I have decided to have a worshipping house, a house that believes in the Lord. If you declare by faith and lead with authority, you will naturally bring your children in.

I think each and every head of the family ought to gather his children and dependents together and declare to them the words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." If you take this position of faith, all of your house will eventually come to the Lord, for they have no escape. This, indeed, is marvelous.

We have noticed now that household salvation is in the Bible, but our experience in this respect is not adequate. Thank God, when I was in England, I had the privilege of meeting a group of brothers who also believed in salvation for the household. I found in their midst family after family of Christians. I was deeply impressed. According to our faith, so shall God do to us. As I talked with them, I was really surprised. We have the knowledge, but they have the fact.

Once I visited George Cutting, the author of "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment." He was at that time already over eighty years of age. His hair and beard were all white. He lay in bed, and his mind was somewhat dull. But when I visited him, he said to me, "Brother Nee, you know, we cannot do without Him and He cannot do without us." He was in intimate communion with the Lord. As you know, aside from the Bible, this little booklet, "Safety, Certainty and 103 104 The Good Confession

Enjoyment," has had the largest circulation. Thank the Lord, Mr. Cutting had a family of over eighty persons and all of them were saved. His sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren were all saved. He believed in the word, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house"; so his whole house was saved.

I do hope that you are convinced of household salvation. New believers should gather their family members and declare to them that hereafter their houses belong to God. Whether they have truly believed or have not believed, whether they approve or oppose, the declaration must be made. As head of the family, you must take this position. You should hold the rein of your house that all will serve God. Let me tell you: if you take this stand by faith, it shall be done to you.

If all who have been saved had come by households instead of by individuals, what a difference it would have made. Brethren, never be negligent of the children in our homes. One of the great failures of the Protestant church is in the family. They give their next generation too much freedom. Look at the Roman Catholic Church. They need not preach the gospel, for all who are born into Catholic houses are reckoned as Catholics. You do not see them preaching on the streets like the Salvation Army, and yet generation after generation is propagated within the Catholic Church. They do not stress so much on adding from the outside as on being born within. Disregarding personal faith, all in Catholic families are included in the system. Today there are three times as many Catholics as Protestants in the world. We too should be careful not to let our children leak out into the world.

If we truly believe, the Lord will work. The way is clear: God will bless us by the household. Household salvation is a tremendous principle—one believes and the whole house shall be saved. So stand firm before God that your household may all be transformed.