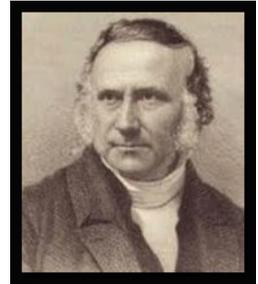


Business Hindrance



A member of my congregation, a young man who was an apprentice, became attentive to the subject of religion; and finally, his convictions became very distressing. I had many conversations with him. It all appeared to be in vain. He continued in his distress, without hope, and almost in despair.

One day he said to me, that he believed, he never should obtain religion, if he did not quit work, and devote his whole time and thought to the subject of his salvation. I told him, that that would do him no good—that his duty was to work—that if he would not work, he ought not to eat—that neglecting an earthly duty would not lead him to the discharge of a spiritual one. I argued the case with him strenuously on the ground of the scriptures, “six days shalt thou labor.” I insisted upon it, that the Bible gave no such directions about work, as he was inclined to follow—that if he expected to do his duty to God, he must not omit doing his duty to the world—that, at most, he ought not to do with but working, any longer than he could do without eating,—for, “if any would not work neither should he eat”—and that this want of time was only an excuse of a deceitful heart, to keep him from an instant duty, that is, fleeing to Christ in faith.

But I could not convince him. He said his mind was drawn off from religion, by his daily employment; and in his opinion, if he had nothing to do, but to seek God, to read and pray, he should soon find salvation. I told him he would be more likely to find a delusion, and call it salvation. But I

could not shake him from his purpose.

He did quit work. He went away over the river, beyond the reach of his companions, got a room alone in an obscure house, and shut himself up with his Bible. He remained there a week. At the end of that time, he called himself to an account, examining his heart, whether he had made any progress. It seemed to him, that he had made none at all. He then determined to be more diligent in the study of his Bible, more anxious in prayer, and to compel his obstinate heart to yield. He often attended our religious meetings in the evenings, and then would return to his solitude. He remained there three weeks. And to his utter astonishment, he found his religious impressions almost entirely gone. He abandoned his retirement and came back to his work in self-defense. "I found," said he, "my own heart was the worst companion I could have. If I cannot come to repentance in the work-shop, I am sure I never can alone. If I had stayed there much longer, I should have cared nothing about religion."

He went to work. His seriousness returned. And in about four weeks, he entertained a hope in Christ. He united with the church, and I knew him for years afterwards. He appeared to be a decided and happy Christian.

The human heart will weave an excuse for impenitence, out of anything. This want of time is a very common excuse. But it is a falsehood. The advice given to anxious inquirers so frequently in times of revival, to shut themselves up alone till they have found salvation, just misleads them. It makes them think they lack time for religion; while, in fact, they only lack heart. Let us obey the Bible.