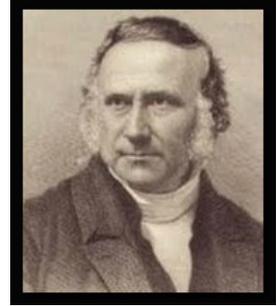


Nobody Said Anything To Me



The title which I have given to this sketch, is taken from the lips of a young man, who afterwards became a member of my church. He had called upon me for conversation upon the subject of his religious duty; and after conversing with him, and saying such things to him as I thought appropriate to his state of mind, I asked him how it came about that he had not given his prayerful attention to the subject of religion before.

“Nobody said anything to me,” says he.

“Yes,” I replied, “I have said a great many things to you.”

“I know you have in sermons; but I mean, nobody said anything to me in particular, before yesterday.”

“Who said anything to you yesterday?”

“Henry Clapp,” said he, (naming a young man who had recently entertained a hope in God.)

“What did Henry say to you?”

“As I met him in the street,” says he, “he stopped me, and told me he had something to say to me, and asked me if he might say it. I said yes, he might. And then he said, ‘It is high time for you to begin to seek the Lord.’”

“And what did you answer?”

“I hardly had time to answer at all, for he passed right on. But I said to him, when he had got a few feet from me, ‘So it is; Henry.’ He turned back his face partly toward me, looking over his shoulder, and answered, ‘do it then,’ and went right on.”

“Have you seen him since?”

“No, sir.”

“You say, nobody said anything to you before. If he, or some one else, had spoken to you before, do you think you would have begun before?”

“I believe I should.”

Such was the opinion of this young man. To this opinion he adhered long after. The last time I spoke to him on that subject, he said to me that he believed he “should have sought the Lord years before, if anybody had spoken to him about it.”

Here, then, was a young man, living in the midst of a Christian community till he was more than twenty years old, a regular attendant at church, known to scores of Christian men and women; and yet, “nobody said anything to him!” The first sentence that was uttered to him was not lost upon him.

There are few points of duty more difficult for wise and engaged Christians to decide, than it is to decide what they shall say, or whether they shall say anything, to the irreligious persons whom they are accustomed to meet. Many times they are afraid to say anything to them on the subject of religion, lest they should do them an injury by awakening opposition or disgust.

No man can teach them their duty. What may be the duty of one, may not be the duty of another. The question depends upon so many things, upon character, upon intimacy, upon time, place, occasion, age, and a thousand other circumstances, that no wise man will ever attempt to lay down any general rule upon the subject. But if a Christian’s heart longs for the conversion of sinners as it ought, he will not be likely to err. If he speaks to an unconverted sinner, in love, and alone, and without disputation, and in humility, and in the spirit of prayer, his words will do no harm. He may not be able to do good, but at least he can try. The unconverted in the midst of God’s people, meeting them every day, their friends, their associates, and neighbors, certainly ought not to be able to declare, “nobody said anything to me,”—“no man cared for my soul.”