

## LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS

the way of all living, 'What might I not have done for him if I had but taken him in time!' Brethren, let that anecdote be a reminder to us all that we should seek to be wise in winning souls before it is too late to rescue them from everlasting destruction.

Seventhly, and lastly, anecdotes and illustrations are exceedingly useful because *THEY CATCH THE EAR OF THE UTTERLY CARELESS*. Something is wanted in every sermon for this class of people; and an anecdote is well calculated to catch the ear of the thoughtless and the ungodly. We really desire their salvation, and we would bait our trap in any way possible by which we might catch them for Christ. We cannot expect our young people to come and listen to learned doctrinal disquisitions that are not at all embellished with anything that interests their immature minds. Nay, even grown-up people, after the toils of the week, some of them **busy till early on the Sunday morning, cannot be expected to attend to long prosaic discourses which are not broken by a single anecdote.**

Oh, dear, dear, dear! How I do pity those unpractical brethren who do not seem to know to whom they are preaching! 'Ah!' said a brother once, 'whenever I preach, I do not know where to look, and so I look up at the ventilator.' Now, there is not anybody up in the ventilator; there cannot be supposed to be anybody there, unless the angels of heaven are listening there to hear the words of truth. A minister should not preach *before* the people, but he should preach right *at* them; let him look straight at them; if he can, let him search them through and through, and take stock of them, as it were, and see what they are like, and then suit his message to them.

I have often seen some poor fellow standing in the aisle at the Tabernacle. Why, he looks just like a sparrow that has got into a church, and cannot get out again! He cannot make out what sort of service it is; he begins to count how many people sit in the front row in the gallery, and all kinds of ideas pass through his mind. Now I want to attract his attention; how shall I do it? If I quote a text of Scripture, he may not know what it means, and may not be interested in it. Shall I put a bit of Latin into the sermon, or quote the original Hebrew or Greek of my text? That will not do for such a man. What shall I do? Ah! I know a story that will, I believe, just fit him. Out it comes, and the man does

*The Uses of Anecdotes and Illustrations*

not look up at the gallery any more; but he is wondering whatever the preacher is at. Something is said that so exactly suits his case that he begins to ask himself who has been telling the minister about him, and he thinks, 'Why, I know; my wife comes to hear this man sometimes, so she has been telling him all about me!' Then he feels curious to hear more, and while he is looking up at the preacher, and listening to the truth that is being proclaimed, the first gleam of light on divine things dawns upon him; but if we had kept on with our regular discourse, and had not gone out of our way, what might have become of that man, I cannot tell. 'They say I ramble', said Rowland Hill, in a sermon I have been reading this afternoon; 'They say I ramble, but it is because you ramble, and I am obliged, to ramble after you. They say I do not stick to my subject; but, thank God, I always stick to my object, which is, the winning of your souls, and bringing you to the cross of Jesus Christ!'

Mr Bertram aptly illustrates the way in which men are engrossed in worldly cares by telling the story of the captain of a whaling ship, whom he tried to interest in the things of God, and who said, 'It is no use, sir; your conversation will not have any effect upon me. I cannot hear what you are saying, or understand the subject you are talking about. I left my home to try to catch whales, I have been a year and nine months looking for whales, sir, and I have not caught a whale yet. I have been ploughing the deep in search of whales; when I go to bed, I dream of whales; and when I get up in the morning, I wonder if there will be any whales caught that day; there is a whale in my heart, sir, a whale in my brain, and it is of no use for you to talk to me about anything else but whales.' So, your people have their business in their heads, and in their hearts, they want to make a fortune, and retire; or else they have a family of children to bring up, and Susan must be married, and John must be got into a situation, and it is no use for you to talk to them about the things of God unless you can drive away the whales that keep floundering and splashing about.

There is a merchant, perhaps, who has just thought of some bad bill; or another has looked across the building, and noticed a piece of ribbon of a particular colour, and he thinks, 'Yes, I ought to have had a larger stock of that kind of thing, I see that it is getting fashionable!', or it may be that one of the hearers has caught sight of his neighbour, and he