

PUBLIC TESTIMONY: A DEBT TO GOD AND MAN NO. 1996

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then they said to one another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.”
2 Kings 7:9.*

YOU are not surprised to find that, when those four lepers, outside the gate of Samaria, had made the great discovery that the Syrian camp was deserted, they first satisfied their own hunger and thirst. And quite right too. Who would do otherwise? It is true that they were bound to go and tell other hungry ones, but they could do that with all the louder voice, and they were the surer of the truth they had to tell, when they had first refreshed themselves. It might have been a delusion. They were prudent to test their discovery before they told it.

Having refreshed and enriched themselves, they thought of going to tell the besieged and starving citizens. I would advise every soul that has found Christ to imitate the lepers in this matter. Make sure that you have found the Savior. Eat and drink of Him—enrich yourself with Him, and then go and publish the glad tidings. I shall not object to your going as early as possible, but still, I would prefer that you should not go to assure others until you are quite certain yourself.

I would have you go with a personal witness, for this will be your chief power with others. If you run too soon, and do not first taste and see that the Lord is good, you may say to others, “There is abundance in the camp,” and they may reply, “Why have you not eaten of it yourself?” Thus your testimony will be weakened, if not destroyed, and you will wish you had held your peace. It is better that you first of all delight yourself in fatness before you proclaim the fact of a festival. It is good that your faith should grasp the exceedingly great and precious promises, and then, when you run as a tidings-bearer, you will testify what you have seen. If any say to you, “Are you sure that it is true?” you will answer, “Ay, that I am, for I have tasted and handled of the good Word of life.” Personal enjoyments of true godliness assist us in our testimony for truth and grace.

But the point I desire to bring out is this—if those lepers had stayed in the camp all night, if they had remained lying on the Syrian couches, singing, “Our willing souls would stay in such a place as this,” and if they had never gone at all to their compatriots, shut up and starving within the city walls, their conduct would have been brutal and inhuman.

I am going to talk to some at this time (I do not know how many of the sort may be here), who think that they have found the Savior, who believe that they are saved, who write themselves down as having truly enjoyed religion, and who imagine that now their sole business is to enjoy themselves. They delight to feed on the Word, and to this I do not object at all, but then, if it is all feeding and nothing comes of it, I ask to what end are they fed? If the only result of our religion is the comfort of our poor little souls, if the beginning and the end of piety is contained within one’s self, why, it is a strange thing to be in connection with the unselfish Jesus, and to be the fruit of His gracious Spirit. Surely, Jesus did not come to save us that we might live unto ourselves. He came to save us from selfishness.

I am afraid that some of my hearers have never yet confessed the work of God in their souls. They feel that, whereas they were once blind, now they see, but they have never declared what the Lord has done for their souls. Has all this work been done in a corner for their personal pleasure? I want to have a drive at them, and at all others who have not yet considered that the object of their receiving grace from

the Lord is that God may, through them, communicate grace to others. No man lives unto himself. No man should attempt so to live.

My subject will be this—first, *to hide the great discovery of grace is altogether wrong*. In the second place, *if we have made that discovery we ought to declare it*. And thirdly, *this declaration should be continually made*. It should not be a matter of one solemn occasion, but our whole life should be a witness to the power and grace which we have found in Christ

I. First, then, dear friends, **TO HIDE THE DISCOVERY OF DIVINE GRACE WOULD BE WRONG.**

Let me ask you to remember the connection of my text. God had come to the Syrian camp, and had by Himself alone routed the whole Syrian host. They had every man of them fled. Though the starving citizens of Samaria did not know it, the Lord had made provision in abundance for all their hunger, and there it was, within a stone's throw of the city gates. The Lord had done it. His own right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory, and had provided for Israel's needs, though they did not know it. These lepers found out the joyful facts, and had utilized their discovery by entering into possession of the treasure. They were appointed to make known the joyful facts, and if they had concealed them they would have been guilty men.

For, first, *their silence would have been contrary to the divine purpose in leading them to make the discovery*. Why were these four lepers led into the camp that they might learn that the Lord of hosts had put the enemy to the rout? Why, mainly that they might go back, and tell the rest of their countrymen.

I fear that the doctrine of election has too often been preached in such a way that thoughtful minds have objected to it upon the ground of its tendency to selfishness. Men do not like the doctrine anyhow, but there is no use in putting it in a needlessly ugly shape. Election is a fact, but a fact which relates to other facts. The Lord calls out of the world a people, a peculiar people, whom He makes to be His own, but the ultimate end of the election of these men is that they may gather in others. As Israel was chosen to preserve the light for the nations, so has the Lord chosen His believing people that they may bring in the other sheep which are not yet of the fold.

We are not to get within four narrow walls, and sit and sing—

*“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground:
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness.”*

Or if we do so sing, we are not to bless ourselves over and over again as being the end and climax of the Lord's work and wisdom. No, but since we are a garden walled around, we are to bring forth fruit to Him who owns us. We are to be a nursery ground. I know a piece of ground upon which some millions of young fir trees were grown, which were afterwards planted out upon a range of Scotch hills. Such should our churches be.

Though comparable in our feebleness to a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, we expect that the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. We are chosen unto salvation that afterwards we may go and be lights to those who sit in darkness, and spiritual helps to those that are ready to perish. These four men were allowed to see what God had done on purpose that they might run home with the cheering news. If they had not gone to Samaria with the tidings they would have been false to the divine purpose, and so will you be, my brother, if you continue to hold your tongue. So will you be, my sister, if you never say, “The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad.” Let the purpose of God, for which you ought to adore Him every day, be plenteously fulfilled in you, and let it be seen that He has chosen you to know Christ that you may make Him known to others.

These people would not only have been false to the divine purpose, but *they would have failed to do well*. They said, one to another, “We do not well.” Did it ever strike some of you, dear friends, that it is a very serious charge to bring against yourselves, “We do not well”? I am afraid that many are content because they can say, “We do not drink. We do not swear. We do not gamble. We do not lie.” Who said you did? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves if you did any of those things. But is this enough? What are you actually doing? “To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.”

I have heard of perfect people, but I have not seen any such. If it came to acts of positive commission of sin, I could possibly compare notes with such brethren, for I endeavor to be blameless, and I trust I am, but when I remember that sins of *omission* are really and truly sins, I bid “good-bye” to all notions of perfection, for my many shortcomings overwhelm me. No man has done all the good he could have done, and ought to have done. If any man assures me that he has done all the good that might have been possible to him, I do not believe him. I will say no more, but let us labor to avoid sins of omission.

Dear friend, if you know the Lord, and you have never confessed His name, then you have not done well. If you have been in company and you have not spoken up for Christ, you have not done well. If you have had opportunities of telling out the Gospel even to children, and you have not done so, you have not done well. It is a heavy charge, after all, for a man’s conscience to bring against him when it forces him to join with others in saying, “We do not well.”

That is the reason why the barren fig tree was cut down. He that kept the vineyard did not say, “Cut it down, it bears such sour fruit.” It bore no fruit at all. There was the point—it cumbered the ground. Take heed, oh, take heed, of a religion which does not make you positively do well! If all that your religion does is to keep you from doing mischief, it has too small an effect to be the religion of Jesus Christ. He asks, “What do you more than others? Do not even publicans do so?” God help us then to make an open declaration of what His Spirit has secretly taught to us!

Besides this, had those lepers held their tongues, *they would actually have been doing evil*. Suppose that they had kept their secret for twenty-four hours, many hundreds might have died of starvation within the walls of Samaria. Had they so perished, would not the lepers have been guilty of their blood? Do you not agree with that? May not neglect be as truly murder as a stab or a shot? If, in your street, a man shall perish through not knowing the Savior, and you never made an effort to instruct him, how will you be guiltless at the last great day?

If there are any within your reach who sink down to perdition for want of the knowledge of Christ, and you could have given them that knowledge, will your skirts be free from blood in the day when the great inquest shall be held, and God shall make inquisition for the blood of men? I put it to the consciences of many silent Christians, who have never yet made known to others what God has made known to them—how can you be clear from guilt in this matter?

Do not say, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” for I shall have to give you a horrible answer if you do. I shall have to say, “No, Cain, you are not your brother’s keeper, but you are your brother’s killer.” If, by your effort you have not sought his good, by your neglect you have destroyed him. If I were able to swim, and I saw any of you in a stream, and I merely looked at you, and greatly regretted that you should be so foolish as to tumble in, but never stretched out a hand to rescue you, your death would lie at my door, and I am sure it is so with those who talk about enjoying religion, and yet keep it all to themselves, and never rescue the perishing. Stern truths these. Let them go home where they ought to go home, and may God the Holy Ghost bless them!

Again, these lepers, if they had held their tongues, *would have acted most unseasonably*. Note how they put it themselves, they say, “We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.” O brother, has Jesus washed your sins away, and are you silent about it? I remember the day when I first found peace with God through the precious blood, and I declare that I was forced to tell somebody about it. I could not have stifled the voice within me.

What, my dear brother! Are you saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and can you keep the blessing to yourself? Do you not wonder that all the timbers in your house do not groan at you, and that the earth itself does not open her mouth to rebuke you? Can you be such an ungrateful wretch as to have tasted of amazing mercy, and yet to have no word to say by way of confessing it?

Come, brother, come, sister, overcome that retiring spirit of yours, and cry—"I cannot help it. I am driven to it. I must and will bear witness that there is a Savior, and a great one." Personally, *I* cannot hold my tongue, and never will while I can speak.

*"E'er since by faith I saw the stream,
His flowing wounds supply;
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die!"*

Oh, that God would stir up every silent Christian to speak out for his Lord! We have had enough of the dumb spirit. Oh, for the Spirit in the form of tongues of fire!

One thing more—*silence may be dangerous*. What said these men? "If we tarry till morning light, some mischief will come upon us." That morning light is very close to some of you. If you tarry till tomorrow morning before you have spoken about Christ, some mischief may come upon you. I might put it farther off on a grander scale. There is a morning light which will soon be seen over yon gloomy hills of darkness. How soon we cannot tell, but our Master has bidden us to be always on the watch for it. In such an hour as we think not, He will come, and when He comes, it will be to reward His faithful servants.

There is a text which speaks of our not being ashamed at His coming. What a wonderful text that is! What if He were to come tonight, should we not be ashamed? He may come ere the unformed word has quit my lip or reached your ear. The shrill clarion of the archangel may startle the dead from their graves, and the Christ may be among us on His great white throne!

Suppose He should come tonight, and you, who have thought that you knew Him and loved Him, should never have sought to win a soul for Him—how will you face Him? How will you answer your Lord, whom you have never owned? You knew the way of salvation and you concealed it. You knew the balm for the wounds of sinners, and you let them bleed to death. They were thirsty, and you gave them no draught of living water. They were hungry, and you gave them no bread of life.

Sirs, I cannot venture to His judgment seat with such a blot upon my soul! Can you? Brother, can you? Sister, can you? What! Your own dear children—your own flesh and blood—have you never prayed with them, nor sought to bring them to Jesus? What! The servants of your house—have you never spoken of the Savior to them? Your wife, your husband, your old father, your brother—and you have never yet opened your lips to say, "Jesus has saved me. I wish you were saved too"! You might have done as much as that. You have said bolder things than that to them about worldly matters.

Oh, by the love of God, or even by a lower motive, by the love of your fellow men, burst your bands asunder, and speak out for Christ, or else, if your profession be true, you do not well. Indeed, there is reason to question your religion.

Thus much upon the first point—to hide the blessed discovery would have been wrong for the lepers, and it would be wrong for us.

II. Secondly, if we have made the blessed discovery of Christ's gracious work in routing our enemies, and providing for our needs, and if we have tasted of the fruit of that glorious victory ourselves, **WE OUGHT TO MAKE A VERY EXPLICIT AVOWAL OF THAT DISCOVERY.**

It ought to be confessed very solemnly, and in the way which the Lord Himself has appointed. How can we better show forth all righteousness than by being buried with Christ in baptism, according to His command? We ought, also, to unite with the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to co-operate therewith in holy service. This ought to be done very decidedly, because *our Lord requires it.*

Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ couples always with faith the confession of it. He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” We constantly find the two together. The faith that saves is not a sneaking faith, which tries to get to heaven by keeping off the road, and creeping along behind the hedge. The true faith comes into the middle of the road, feeling, “This is the King’s highway, and I am not ashamed to be found in it.” This is the faith which Jesus expects of you, the faith which cries, “I have lifted my hand unto the Lord, and I will not go back.”

Next, if you have found Christ, *the man who was the means of leading you to Christ has a claim upon you that he should know of it.* Oh, the joy of my heart, the other day, when I saw some four-and-twenty who were my spiritual children! I felt then that I was receiving large wages at the Master’s hands. Many get good from the minister, and yet they never let him know of it. This is not doing as they would be done by. It is rather like cheating us of the reward of our ministry. To know that God is blessing us is a great comfort and stimulus. Do not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn.

Next, I think *the church of God has a claim upon all of you* who have discovered the great love of Jesus. Come and tell your fellow Christians. Tell the good news to the King’s household. The church of God is often greatly refreshed by the stories of new converts. I am afraid that we who get over fifty come by degrees to be rather old-fogeyfied, and it is a great blessing to us to hear the cries of the babes in grace, and to listen to the fresh and vivid testimony of new converts. It stirs our blood, and quickens our souls, and thus the church of God is benefited.

If some of you old folks had been at the church meeting the other Monday evening, and heard some five little children, one after the other, telling what the Lord had done for their souls, you would have agreed with me that you could not have done it so well yourselves. You may know more, but you could not have stated what you know so simply, so sweetly, so charmingly, as those dear children did. One of them was but nine years old, or younger, and yet she told of free grace and dying love as clearly as if she had been eighty or ninety. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord ordains strength. Some of you have known the Lord for many years, and yet you have never confessed Him. How wrong it is of you! How much you injure the church!

Besides that, a decided testimony for Christ *is due to the world.* If a man is a soldier of the cross, and does not show his colors, all his comrades are losers by his want of decision. There is nothing better for a man when he is brought to Christ than for him decidedly to express his faith, and let those about him know that he is a new man. Unfurl your standard. Decision for Christ and holiness will save you from many dangers, and ward off many temptations.

Compromise creates a life of misery. I would sooner be a toad under a harrow than be a Christian man who tries to conceal his Christianity. It is sometimes difficult, in this age, for a man to follow his conscience, for you are expected to run with a party, but I am of this mind—that I would sooner die than not live a free man. It is not life to have to ask another man’s permission to think. If there be any misrepresentation, if there be any scorn, if there be any contempt for being a Christian, let me have my share of it, for a Christian I am, and I wish to be treated like the rest.

If all Christians came out, and declared what the Lord has done for their souls, the world would feel the power of Christianity, and would not think of it as men now do, as though it were some petty superstition, of which its own votaries were ashamed. If indeed you are soldiers of the cross, bear your shields into the light of day, and be not ashamed of your Captain! What can there be to make us blush in the service of such a Lord? Be ashamed of shame, and quit yourselves like men!

Your open confession is due all around, and it is especially *due to yourself.* It is due to your spiritual manhood that, if the Lord has done anything for you, you should gratefully acknowledge it. It is also due to your love of others—and love of others is of the very essence of Christianity—that you should explicitly declare that you are on the Lord’s side. What more shall I say? What more need I say? I would sound the trumpet, and summon to our Lord’s banner all that are good men and true.

III. THIS DECLARATION SHOULD BE CONTINUALLY MADE.

Here I speak of many who have confessed Christ publicly, and are not ashamed of His name. Beloved, we ought always to make Christ known, not only by our once-made profession, but by frequently bearing witness in support of that profession. I wish that we did this more amongst God's own people. Miss Havergal very admirably says, "The King's household were the most unlikely people to need to be instructed in this good news—so it seems at first sight. But, secondly, the lepers were the most unlikely persons to instruct the King's household, and yet they did so."

You and I might say—Christian people do not require to be spoken to about our Lord and His work. They know more than we do. If they do require it, who are we, who are less than the least of all our Master's household, that we should presume to instruct them? Thus even humility might check our bearing testimony in certain companies. If you were in the midst of uninstructed people, to whom you could do good, you might feel bound to speak, but among Christians you are apt to be dumb. Have you not said to yourself, "I could not speak to that good old man? He is much better instructed in the faith than I am"?

Meanwhile, what do you think the aforesaid good old man is saying? He says to himself, "He is a fine young man, but I could not speak to him, for he has so much more ability than I have." Thus you are both as mute as mice when you might be mutually edified. Worse still, perhaps you begin talking upon worthless themes, you speak of the weather, or of the last wretched scandal, or of politics. Suppose we were to change all this, and each one say, "I am a Christian man, and next time I meet a brother Christian, whether he is my superior or not, I shall speak to him of our common Master."

If two children meet, they will do well to speak of father and mother. If one is a very little child, he may know but little about his father compared with the knowledge possessed by his big sister, but then he has kissed his father last, and has of late enjoyed more caresses from his father than his grown-up sister has. The elder can tell more of father's wisdom and providence, but the younger has a more vivid sense of his tenderness and love, and so they can unite in fervent admiration.

Why should Christian people so often meet and part without exchanging five words about the Lord Jesus? I am not condemning any of you. I am censuring myself more than anyone else. We do not bear enough testimony for our Lord. I am sure I felt quite taken aback the other day when a coachman said to me, "You believe that the Lord directs the way of His people, don't you, sir?" I said, "That I do. Do you know anything about it?" "Why," he said, "yes. This morning I was praying the Lord to direct my way, and you engaged me, and I felt that it was a good beginning for the day."

We began talking about the things of God directly. That coachman ought not to have been the first to speak—as a minister of the Gospel, I ought to have had the first word. We have much to blame ourselves for in this respect. We hold our tongues because we do not know how a word might be received, but we might as well make the experiment. No harm could come of trying.

Suppose you were to go into a place where persons were sick and dying, and you had medicine about you which would heal them. Would you not be anxious to give them some of it? Would you say nothing about it because you could not tell how it might be received? How could you know how it would be received except by making the offer? Tell poor souls about Jesus. Tell them how His grace healed *you*, and perhaps they will answer, "You are the very person I need, you have brought me the news I have longed to hear."

There are districts in London, to my knowledge, in the suburbs especially, where, if a man knocks at the door, and begins to say a word about Christ, the poor people answer "No one ever calls upon us to do us any good. We are left to perish." It is shameful that it should be so, but so it is. Men live and men die in this Christian country as much lost to the knowledge of the Gospel as if they had lived in the Congo. If they lived in the Congo, we should all subscribe to send a missionary up the river to tell them of Jesus and His love, even at the risk of his dying of fever, we should send a missionary to them, and yet those who live next door to our homes, or are even in our employ, are left in ignorance of salvation.

The woman that comes in to clean, the man who sweeps up the mud from the street—these may know no more of Christ than Khoikhois of South Africa, and yet we do not speak about Christ to them.

Is not this shocking? We have satisfied our own hunger, and now we allow others to starve! If I should persuade any brother here, or any sister here, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, to shake off sinful lethargy, I would have done good service.

Dear friends, do let us quit indifference, and get to work for Jesus. It is not enough to me that I should myself preach the Gospel, I would gladly turn you all out to proclaim it. Oh, that the thousands here assembled would go through London proclaiming Christ! The result of such a crusade eternity alone could reveal.

I spoke from this pulpit once about Christian young men who were great hands at cricket, but could not bowl straight at a sinner's heart. A gentleman who was present that day, and heard me said, "That is true about me, I am a Christian man, but yet I am better known as a cricketer than as a worker." He began to serve his Lord with his whole heart, and he is at this day in the front rank of usefulness. Oh, that I could win another such! The multitudes of London are dying in the dark. I beseech you bring them all the light you have! Myriads are perishing all over this United Kingdom. Hasten to their rescue! The world also remains under the power of evil. I beseech you to reclaim it!

"I do not know anything," says one. Then do not say what you don't know. "Oh!" cries another, "I hope I am a Christian." Tell others how you became a believer and that will be the Gospel. You need not study a book, and try to make a sermon with three heads and a tail, but go home, and say to your biggest boy, "John, I want to tell you how your father found a Savior." Go home to that sweet little daughter of yours, and say, "Dear Sarah, I want to tell you how Jesus loves me." Before the morning light you may have had the joy of seeing your dear children brought to the Savior if this very evening you talk to them out of the fullness of your heart.

Only this I say to you, if you do not love my Master, then turn from your evil ways. If you have not trusted Jesus, trust Him at once, and find salvation full and free. When you have found that salvation, then publish the tidings of it. By the love of Him that bled upon the cross—by every drop of blood from His pierced heart, awaken yourselves to serve Him with all your might. Either with tongue or with pen, tell of the love of Jesus.

*"Tell it out among the heathen,
That He reigneth from the tree."*

Sound it forth everywhere beneath yon arch of heaven that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and add, "He has saved me." God bless you!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 KINGS 7:3-16; PSALM 34

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—228, 246, 632

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.