

MEN SHOULD TESTIFY.

We Should be Glad to Give Our Experience.

Spread the Story of the Goodness of God Wherever You Go, is the Earnest Advice of Dr. Talmage, Who Gives His Own Testimony.

Rev. Dr. Talmage in his latest sermon urged his hearers to confess Christ and give their religious experiences in public so that others may be helped. His subject was "Say So," and his text was selected from Psalms cvii 3, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

In these January days, thousands of ministers and private Christians are wondering about the best ways of starting a revival of religion. I can tell you a way of starting a revival, continental, hemispheric, and world-wide. You say a revival starts in Heaven. Well, it starts in Heaven just as a prosperous harvest starts in Heaven. The sun must shine and the rains must descend, but unless you plow and sow and cultivate the earth you will not raise a bushel of wheat or a peck of corn between now and the end of the world. How, then, shall a universal revival start? By all Christian people telling the story of their own conversion. Let ten men and women get up next week in your prayer meeting, and not in a conventional or canting or doleful way, but in the same tone they employ in the family or place of business, and tell how they crossed the line, and the revival will begin then and there, if the prayer meeting has not been so dull as to drive out all except those concerning whom it was foreordained from all eternity that they should be there. There are so many different ways of being converted that we want to hear all kinds, so that our own case may be helped. It always puts me back to hear only one kind of experience, such as a man gives when he tells of his Pauline conversion—how he was knocked senseless, and then had a vision and heard voices, and after a certain number of days of horror got up and shouted for joy. All that discourages me, for I was never knocked senseless, and I never had such a sudden burst of religious rapture that I lost my equilibrium. But after awhile a Christian man got up in some meeting and told us how he was brought up by a devout parentage, and had always been thoughtful about religious things, and gradually the peace of the gospel came into his soul like the dawn of the morning—no perceptible difference between moments and moments—but after awhile all perturbation settled down into a hope that had consoled and strengthened him during all the vicissitudes of a lifetime. I said: "That is exhilarating; that was my experience," and so I was strengthened. In another prayer meeting a man got up and told us how he once hated God, and went through all the round of iniquity, until we were all on nettles lest he should go too much into the particulars, but one day he was by some religious power hurled flat, and then got up a Christian, and had ever since been going around with a Baxter Bible with large flaps under his arm, a floating evangelist. Well, under this story many are not helped at all, for they know they never hated God, and they were never dissolute. But after awhile some Christian woman arises and says: "I have nothing extraordinary to tell; yet I think the cares of life, the anxieties about my children, and two graves opened in our family plot, made me feel the need of God, and weak and helpless and heart-broken, I flung myself upon His mercy, and I feel what the Bible calls the 'peace of God which passeth all understanding,' and I ask your prayers that I may live nearer to the Christ who has done so much for me." I declare that before that woman got through we were all crying, not bitter tears, but tears of joyful emotion, and in three days, in that neighborhood, all the ice had gone out of the river in a spring-time freshness of salvation. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

I have but little interest in what people say about religion as an abstraction, but I have limitless interest in what people say about what they have personally felt of religion. It was an expression of his own gratitude for personal salvation which led Charles

Wesley, after a season of great despondency about his soul and Christ had spoken pardon, to write that immortal hymn: Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer's praise. It was after Abraham Lincoln had been comforted in the loss of "Fad," the bright boy of the White House, that he said: "I now see as never before the preciousness of God's love in Jesus Christ, and how we are brought near to God as our Father by him." What a thrill went through the meeting in Portland, Ore., when an ex-attorney general of the United States arose and said: "Last night I got up and asked the prayers of God's people. I feel now perfectly satisfied. The burden is rolled off and all gone, and I feel that I could run or fly into the arms of Jesus Christ."

What a record for all time and eternity was made by Gellacius, the play-actor, in the theater at Heliopolis. A burlesque of Christianity was put upon the stage. In derision of the ordinance of baptism a bathtub, filled with water, was put upon the stage, and another actor, in a awful blasphemy, dipped Gellacius, pronouncing over him the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But coming forth from the burlesque baptism, he looked changed, and was changed, and he cried out to the audience, "I am a Christian; I will die as a Christian." Though he was dragged out and stoned to death, they could not down the testimony made under such awful circumstances. "I am a Christian; I will die as a Christian."

Samuel Hick, an English Methodist preacher, solicited aid for West India missions from a rich miser and failed. Then the minister dropped on his knees and the miser said: "I will give thee a guinea if thou wilt give over." But the minister continued to pray, until the miser said: "I will give thee two guineas if thou wilt give over." Then the money was taken to the missionary meeting. Oh, the power of prayer! Melancthon, utterly discouraged, was passing along a place where children were heard praying and he came back, saying: "Brethren, take courage; the children are praying for us." Nothing can stand before prayer. An infidel came into a Bible class to ask puzzling questions. Many of the neighbors came in to hear the discussion. The infidel arose and said to the leader of the Bible class: "I hear you allow questions asked." "Oh, yes," said the leader, "but at the start let us kneel down and ask God to guide us." "Oh, no," said the infidel, "I did not come to pray; I came to discuss." "But," said the leader, "you will of course submit to our rule, and that is always to begin with prayer." The leader knelt in prayer, and then arose and said to the infidel: "Now you pray." The infidel replied: "I cannot pray; I have no God to pray to. Let me go! Let me go!" The spectators who expected fun, found nothing but overpowering solemnity, and a revival started, and among the first who were brought in was the infidel. That prayer did it. In all our lives there have been times when we felt that prayer was answered. Then let us say so.

Let the same outspokenness be employed toward those by whom we have been personally advantaged. We wait until they are dead before we say so. Your parents have planned for your best interests all these years. They may sometimes, their nervous system used up by the cares, the losses, the disappointments, the worriments of life, be more irritable than they ought to be, and they probably have faults which have become oppressive as the years go by. But those eyes, long before they took on spectacles, were watching for your welfare, and their hands, not as smooth and much more deeply lined than once, have done for you many a good day's work. Life has been to them more of a struggle than you will ever know about, and much of the struggle has been for you, and how much they are wrapped up in your welfare you will never appreciate. Have you by word or gift or behavior expressed your thanks? Or if you cannot quite get up to say it face to face, have you written it in some holiday salutation? The time will soon pass and they will be gone out of your sight, and their ears will not hear and their eyes will not see. If you owe them any kindness of deed or any words of appreciation why do you not say so? How much we might all of us save ourselves in the matter of regrets if we did not delay until too late an expression of obligation that would have made the last years of earthly life more attractive. The grave is deaf and epitaphs on cold marble cannot make reparation.

The chapter from which I take my text mentions several classes of persons who ought to be outspoken; among them are those who go on a journey. What an opportunity you have, you who spend so much of your time on rail trains or on shipboard, whether on lake or river or sea. Spread the story of God's goodness and your own redemption wherever you go. You will have many a long ride beside some one whom you will never see again, some one who is waiting for one word of rescue or consolation. Make every railroad and steamer a moving palace of saved souls. Casual conversations have harvested a great host for God. There are many Christian workers in pulpits, in mission stations, in Sabbath schools, in unheard of places who are doing their best for God, and without any recognition. They go and come, and no one cheers them. Perhaps all the reward they get is harsh criticism, or rebuke, or their own fatigue. If you have ever heard of any good they have done, let them know about it. If you find some one benefited by their aims, or their prayers, or their cheering word, go and tell them. They may be almost ready to give up their mission. They may be almost in despair because of the seeming lack of results. One word from you may be an ordination that will start them on the chief work of their lifetime. A Christian woman said to her pastor: "My usefulness is done. I do not know why my life is spared any longer, because I can do no

good." Then the pastor replied, "You do me great good every Sabbath." She asked, "How do I do you any good?" and he replied, "In the first place, you are always in your seat in the church, and that helps me, and in the second place, you are always wide awake and alert, looking right up into my face, and that helps me; and in the third place, I often see tears running down your cheeks, and that helps me." What a good thing he did not wait until she was dead before he said so.

There are men to whom life is a grind and a conflict, hereditary tendencies to be overcome, accidental environments to be endured, appalling opposition to be met and conquered, and they never so much as had a rose pinned to their coat lapel in admiration. They never had a song dedicated to their name. They never had a book presented to them with a complimentary word on the fly-leaf. All they have to show for their lifetime battle is scars. But in the last day the story will come out, and that life will be put in holy and transcendent rhythm, and their courage and persistence and faith and victory will not only be announced but rewarded. "These are they that came out of great tribulation and had their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." God will say so.

We miss one of the chief ideas of a last judgment. We put into the picture the fire, and the smoke, and the earthquake, and the descending angels, and the uprising dead, but we omit to put into the picture that which makes the last judgment a magnificent opportunity. We omit the fact that it is to be a day of glorious explanation and commendation. The first justice that millions of unrewarded, and unrecognized, and unappreciated men and women get will be on that day, when services that never called forth so much as a newspaper line of finest pearl or diamond type, as the printers term it, shall be called up for coronation. That will be the day of entronement for those whom the world called "nobodies." Joshua, who commanded the sun and moon to stand still, needs no last judgment to get justice done him, but those men do need a last judgment who at times, in all armies, under the most violent assault, in obedience to command, themselves stop still. Deborah, who encouraged Barak to bravery in battle against the oppressors of Israel, needs no last judgment to get justice done her, for thousands of years have clapped for applause. But the wives who in all ages have encouraged their husbands in the battles of life women whose names were hardly known beyond the next street or the next farm house, must have God say to them: "You did well! You did gloriously! I saw you down in that dairy I watched you in the old farm house mending those children's clothes. I heard what you said in the way of cheer when the bread-winner of the household was in despair. I remember all the sick cradles you have sung to. I remember the backaches, the headaches, the heartaches. I know the story of your knitting-needle as well as I know the story of a queen's sceptre. Your castle on the Heavenly hill is all ready for you. Go up and take it!"

And now I close with giving my own personal testimony, for I must not enjoin upon others that which I decline myself to do. Born at Boundbrook, N. J., of a parentage as pious as the world ever saw, I attest before earth and Heaven that I have always felt the elevating and restraining influence of a loving and a good father and a good mother, and if I am able to do half as well for my children as the old folks did for me I will be thankful forever. The years of my life passed on until at about 18 years of age, I felt the pressure of eternal realities, and after prayer and religious counsel, I passed into what I took to be a saved state and joined the church, and I attest before earth and Heaven that I have found it a most helpful and inspiring association. I like the companionship so well that I cannot be satisfied if I have a day less of it than all eternity. After graduating at collegiate and theological institutions I had the hands of ten or twelve good men put upon my head in solemn ordination at Belleville, N. J., and I attest before earth and Heaven that the work of the gospel ministry has been delightful, and I expect to preach until my last hour. Many times I have passed through deep water of bereavement and, but for the divine promise of Heavenly reunion I would have gone under, but I attest before earth and Heaven that the comfort of the gospel is high, deep, glorious, eternal. Many times have I been maligned and my work misrepresented, but all such falsehood and persecution have turned out for my advantage and enlarged my work, and I attest before earth and Heaven that God has fulfilled to me the promises, "Lo! I am with you all ways," and "The gates of hell shall not prevail against you."

For the cheer of younger men in all departments, let me say you will come out all right if you mind your own business and are patient. The assault of the world is only being rubbed down by a rough Turkish towel, and it improves the circulation and makes one more vigorous. While the future holds for me many mysteries which I do not pretend to solve, I am living in expectation that when my poor work is done I shall go through the gates and meet my Lord and all my kindred who have preceded me, a precious group whom I miss more and more as the years go by and I attest before earth and Heaven that the glories of the Heavenly world illumine my pathway. In courts of law the witness may kiss the Bible or lift his right hand in oath, but as I have often kissed the dear old Book, I now lift my right hand and take oath by him that liveth forever and ever that God is good, and that the gospel is a mighty consolation in days of trouble, and that the best friend a man ever had is Jesus, and that Heaven is absolutely sure to those who trust and serve the blessed Redeemer, to whom be glory and dominion and victory and song, and chorus of white-robed immortals, standing on seas of glass mingled with fire. Amen and amen!

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