

Can I Get a Witness?

Most of us would agree that we are called to give testimony to the saving power of Jesus Christ. But are we responding to the call?

The world is full of people who are dying. They are not dying for want of more sermons or Christian periodicals or religious stories or theories or creeds. They are dying for straightforward, honest, loving, earnest testimony about what God can do for souls. That's what they want.

Those poor men in the shops, in the theaters, in the dance halls—all of them, everywhere—that is what they want: somebody to come and take them lovingly by the collar and tell them that God is God and that He can save them. "He has saved me, my brother, and He can save you!" That is what the world wants. One word like that is better than a sermon, and it will do more for the salvation of the world.

It is time there was a change. The world is famishing for lack of real spiritual bread. It wants something to eat, and you give it a stone!

But God is raising a people who know what it wants and how to give it, who know how to testify to what God has done for them and to what He can do for other poor famishing souls; who can say: "Here, my friend, He can save such as you. I was like you once. I was a slave of sin—the slave of drink, or a blasphemer, or a liar, or a thief, or addicted to some bad habit worse than any of these. I was such a slave, and He has saved me.

He has broken my fetters and set me free. He has saved me, and He can save you." That is what the world wants: testimony witnessing.

Has He saved any of you? Are you testifying to your poor,

famishing, sinking fellow-men? Do you ever look at them and think about where they are going? Do you pity them, love them, long after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ? Do you know anything of that longing?

If so, how can you forbear testifying? "Ye are my witnesses of these things," Jesus said, everywhere, at all times, among all people! (See Acts 1:8.)

It is in the nature of the case that a witness must witness before other people, before living hearers. That is the place to witness, and before enemies, and when he does not know which way the wind will blow, or how the words of God will be received. He must be a true witness, even if he has to seal his testimony with his blood.

This was the kind of witnessing the martyrs did. I often wonder whether there would be any martyrs now. Sometimes I think that the greatest boon to the church of Christ would be a time of persecution.

We would find out, then, whether you are willing to forsake all to follow Him. You know that if the martyrs had taken the standard of religious life that exists now, they would never have been martyrs. They would have looked after their own skins and left the Lord to look after the gospel. But they felt it necessary to be faithful right through, and when they could have gotten off easily, they refused to do it and went to the stake and let the flames lick up their blood.

Those are the witnesses the Lord wants—outside, everywhere, always at it. "Always?" you ask. Yes, always. Why? Because men are always dying and being damned!

Perhaps your friends and neighbors are among them. You get a phone call saying one of them died instantly of a heart attack. And the echo in your soul afterward is, "What I wouldn't give to go and have one talk with him!"

But he's gone! Where is he gone? If he were unwashed and unpardoned and unsaved—where is he gone? I got so wrought up once on this point that I almost lost my reason. I could not sleep at night for thinking of the state of those who die unsaved.

It was this view of the case that led me to open my mouth first in public for God.

I had long had a controversy on this question in my soul. In fact, from the time I was converted, the Spirit of God had constantly been urging me into paths of usefulness and labor that seemed to me impossible.

Some who have heard me speak would hardly believe that I was one of the most timid and bashful disciples the Lord Jesus ever saved. For 10 years of my Christian walk my life was one daily battle with the cross—not because I willfully rejected, as many do, for that I never dared to do.

I used to make up my mind I would, and resolve and intend, and then, when the hour came, I used to fail for want of course. I now see how foolish I was and how wrong. But for some four or five months before I commenced speaking, the controversy had been signally aroused in my soul that God had awakened years before, but that, through mistaken notions, fear and timidity, I had almost allowed to die out.

I was brought to very severe heart searchings at this time. I had not been realizing so much of the divine presence. I had lost a great deal of the power and happiness I once enjoyed. During a season of sickness, one day it seemed as if the Lord revealed it all to me by His Spirit. I had no vision, but a revelation came to my mind.

He seemed to take me back to the time when I was 15 and 16, when I first gave my heart to Him. He showed me all the bitter way, how this one thing had been the fly in the pot of ointment, the bitter in the cup, and had prevented me from

realizing what I would otherwise have done.

I saw how it had hindered the revelation of Himself to me and hindered me from growing in grace and learning more of the deep things of God. After He showed it to me, I prostrated myself on my face before Him and promised Him there in the sick-room: "Lord, if Thou wilt return unto me, as in the days of old, and revisit me with the urgings of Thy Spirit that I used to have, I will obey, if I die in the attempt. I care not; I will obey."

About three months after that I went to the chapel of which my husband was a minister, and he had an extraordinary service. He was having a meeting in which ministers and friends in the town were taking part, and all were giving their testimony and speaking for God.

I was in the minister's pew with my eldest boy, then 4 years old, and there were some thousand people present. I felt much more depressed than usual in spirit and was not expecting anything particular, but as the testimonies went on, I felt the Spirit come upon me. I felt it to the extremities of my fingers and toes.

It seemed as if a voice said to me, "Now, if you were to go and testify, you know I would bless it to your own soul as well as to the souls of the people," and I gasped again and said in my soul, "Yes, Lord, I believe Thou wouldst, but I cannot do it." I had forgotten my vow—it did not occur to me at all.

All in a moment, after I had said that to the Lord, I saw the bedroom where I had lain, and I saw myself there prostrate before the Lord promising Him that, and then the voice seemed to say to me, "Is this consistent with that promise?" I almost jumped up and said, "No, Lord, it is the old thing over again, but I cannot do it," and I felt as though I would sooner die than do it.

Then the devil said: "Besides, you are not prepared to speak. You will look like a fool and have nothing to say." He made a mistake. For once, he overdid himself. It was that word that settled it.

I said, "Ah! This is just the point. I have never yet been willing to be a fool for Christ; now I will be one." Without stopping another moment, I rose up in my seat and walked up the chapel.

My dear husband was just going to conclude. He thought something had happened to me, and so did the people. We had been there two years, and they knew my timid, bashful nature. He stepped down to ask me, "What is the matter, my dear?"

I said, "I want to say a word." He was so taken by surprise, he could only say, "My dear wife wants to say a word" and sat down. He had been trying to persuade me to do it for 10 years. He and a lady in the church, only that very week, had tried unsuccessfully to persuade me to go and address a little cottage meeting of some 20 working people.

I got up—God only knows how—and if any mortal ever did hang on the arm of Omnipotence, I did. I just got up and told the people how it came about. I confessed, as I think everybody should when they have been in the wrong and have misrepresented the religion of Jesus Christ.

I said: "I dare say many of you have been regarding me as a very devoted woman, and one who has been living faithfully to God, but I have come to know that I have been living in disobedience, and to that extent I have brought darkness and leanness into my soul. I promised the Lord three or four months ago, and I dare not disobey. I have come to tell you this and to promise the Lord that I will be obedient to the heavenly vision."

The Lord, as He always does when His people are obedient, opened the windows of heaven and poured out such a blessing

that there was not room to contain it. There was more weeping, they said, in the chapel that day than ever there had been before. Many dated a renewal in righteousness from that very moment and began a life of devotion and consecration to God.

Since that day, He has never allowed me to open my mouth without giving me signs of His presence and blessing. While the devil kept me silent, he kept me comparatively fruitless; now I have ground to hope and expect to meet hundreds in glory whom God has made me instrumental in saving.

Will you be encouraged, my sister? Never mind trembling. I trembled.

Never mind your heart beating. Mine beat nearly through.

Never mind how weak you are. I have gone many a time from the bed to the pulpit and back again.

It is not by human power, wisdom, might or strength; it is by My Spirit, saith the Lord. He loves to use the weak things, that the excellency may be seen to be of God.

We are talking about souls who are dying and going to an eternal death. Will you not rise up? Begin, and the Spirit of God will fall upon you, and you will overcome the devil "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [your] testimony" (Rev. 12:11, KJV).

Thousands will be won! "Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord. "Witness of Me everywhere and always."

Catherine Booth (1829-1890) was the wife of the Rev. William Booth, the founder and commander-in-chief of the Salvation Army, and the mother of nine children. By nature shy and reserved, she eventually became a much-sought-after, powerful preacher.