

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. A CHALLENGE!

A Sermon

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“He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.”—John ix. 21.

THOSE of you, dear friends, who were present this morning will remember that our subject was “Jesus Christ himself.”* We dwelt upon his blessed person. Our faith is fixed on him; our affections are drawn to him; our hopes all bond toward him. Though everything he said or did is precious, yet Jesus himself stands first in our estimation. To know him, to believe him, to love him, is the very essence of our Christianity. Tonight we change our theme. There is a “himself” in our text this evening—a “himself” ‘tis true of a much humbler order. How stand we each one for himself? Our individuality and the personal responsibilities which fall upon ourselves in reference to Christ must not be lost sight of. If, for instance, a spiritual miracle has been wrought upon us, if we are obliged to confess—nay, if we are delighted to confess—that he has opened our eyes, then we are bound, especially those of us who are of ripe understanding, who may be said to be of full age, we are bound to bear our own personal testimony to him. The allegation and the appeal may alike apply to each one of us, “He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.” Jesus Christ *himself* bore our sins, as we heard this morning. He gave *himself* for us, he served us, not by proxy, but by personal consecration; not by alms doled out pitifully, but by his life surrendered as a sacrifice to God cheerfully. Has he thus commended his love to us, what less can we do in return than bear our own brave, bold, personal testimony for him?

What a parallel there is between this man’s case and our own. He had suffered from a grievous, personal evil. He was born blind. So we were born in sin. Sin has cast its blindness over our faculties from our very birth. We shall never forget the midnight of our nature. We could not see even the beauties of Christ himself, though resplendent as the sun at noonday, so blind were we. This man was personally delivered from his ailment, and so have

* No. 1,388. “Jesus Christ Himself.”

we been delivered, I trust. I know many here who can say that, whereas they were blind, now they see. You have received, as the blind man did, a personal blessing, being endowed with sight. The blemish that blighted your life has been healed. It is not that somebody sees for you, and tells you what he sees, but you see for yourself. It is not merely imputed to you that you see, because you have been told what somebody else saw. Now you have no proxy in the matter, no sponsor in the business. You yourself are conscious that a work of grace has been wrought upon you, whereas you were blind now you see, and you know it. The blind man was cured through personal obedience to Christ's command. He heard a special call addressed to him—"Go, wash in the pool." He went, and came seeing. And many here present have heard the voice which says, "Believe and live," and it has come to you, not as a general exhortation, but as a special direction. You have believed and you do live. You have washed, and you have come seeing. Well now, all this is personal, therefore your Lord and Master has a right to expect a personal testimony from you of his power to save. You are of age. When any ask you, I trust you will speak for yourself. Speak up, and speak out for your Master without hesitancy or fear.

I. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SAVED MEN ARE POSITIVELY COMPELLED TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. They must of necessity bear their personal witness.

What else can they do when friends desert them? Father and mother were quite willing to own this young man—that he was their son—quite willing to bear their witness that he was born blind, but they would not go any farther. They could have gone farther if they liked, but they were afraid of that sentence of excommunication which the Jews had already agreed upon: that if any man did confess that Jesus was the Christ he should be put out of the synagogue. So, feeling very little compunction in declining to take any responsibility themselves, for they had great and probably well-founded confidence in their son's power to take care of himself, they did, as it were, abandon him. They threw upon him the stress and onus of giving a plain answer, which would have incurred such obloquy. They backed out of it. They had no wish whatever to become the subjects of persecution because their blind son had been blessed with sight. The young man who had been blind must therefore do battle himself for the good Lord who had bestowed so great a benefit on him. "Ask him," said his parents, "he will speak for himself."

There are times with many young people when their parents, if they do not frown upon their religion, at least turn the cold shoulder to them, and show no sympathy with their faith or their feelings. Some of us are rejoiced when our sons are converted. We are not ashamed to stand by them and to defend them and to protect them whatever may come of it. But there are fathers and mothers who themselves have no liking for the things of God, and so their children, if they are converted, have a hard time of it. I have

known even some who profess to be disciples of Christ hold back very suspiciously, and leave others to champion the Master's cause when it has come to a hard push. In a conversation you expected to hear that old gentleman speak up bravely for the truth of the gospel, but he did not. You knew he was a member of a Christian church, yet he very cautiously held his tongue for a long time, and then quietly said something about not casting pearls before swine. Probably he had not got any pearls, or possibly he was a swine himself. How else could you account for such awful cowardice? But one has known in youthful ardour what it is to be compelled to come out so defiantly as to risk the charge of presumption, because everybody else seemed to be deserting the doctrine it was his duty to defend. It is lamentable how many seem afraid of being compromised themselves. "Ask him; ask him; he will speak for himself," is their puny pretext; while they prudently retire behind the bushes out of rifle range, never coming forward unless, perchance, you should win the victory, when they would most likely come up to share the spoils. Whenever a man is placed in such a condition that he finds himself deserted in the battle for Christ by those who ought to be at his back, then let him disdain retreat, and say right gallantly "I am of age: I will speak for myself. In the name of God I will bear my witness."

Christian men, however reserved and backward their natural disposition may be, are compelled to speak out when they are very much pressed. These Pharisees took this man and questioned him rather closely. They put questions to him by way of examination and cross-examination. "What did he do to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" and so on. He does not appear to have been disturbed or disconcerted by the questions. He acquitted himself grandly. Self-contained, quiet, shrewd, immovable, his mind was made up, and with a thorough mastery of the situation, he was ready for them. He did not hesitate. Well now, I trust if ever you and I are brought to book, and questions are put to us, even though it be with intent to entangle us, we shall never be "ashamed to own our Lord or to defend his cause." Surely we might expect to be smitten dumb if we were ever abashed to speak of Christ when we are adjured to do it. If it comes to a challenge, "On whose side am I?" shall I ever hesitate to say, "I am with Immanuel, the crucified Saviour"? If ever they get us into a corner and say, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth," oh may God give us grace to be prompt and not think twice—"Of course I was, and of course I am still. He is my Friend, my Saviour, my all in all; and I never blush to own his name." Christians must come out and bear each man for himself a clear and distinct testimony.

When others revile and slander our Lord Jesus Christ it becomes imperative on us to commend and extol him. They said to this man, "Give God the praise. We know that this man is a sinner." Then he spoke right gratefully with a heart bubbling up with thankfulness. "He hath opened my eyes." "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." But when they went the

length of saying, "As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is," he spoke up more heroically still. He turned upon his assailants and twitted them with their marvellous ignorance, "that ye know not from whence he is," and he fought for his Master so trenchantly that they were fain to throw away the weapons of debate and take up stones of abuse with which to stone him. Oh, if they speak ill of Christ, shall we be quiet? Does the oath make our blood chill, and shall we never have a word of rebuke for the blasphemers? Shall we hear the cause of Christ denounced in society, and for fear of feeble men refrain our tongue or smooth the matter over? No, let us throw the gauntlet down for Christ and say at once, "I cannot and I will not refrain myself. Now the very stones might speak. When my dear friend—my best of friends—is thus abused, I must and will proclaim the honours of his name." I think Christian people in this country do not take half the liberty they might. If we speak a word of religion or open our Bibles in a railway carriage or anything of that kind, they say, "cants!" They may play cards, I suppose, in a public conveyance with impunity: they may make night hideous with their howlings, they may utter all sorts of profanities and sing lascivious songs at their sweet will, but we are cants forsooth if we take our turn. In the name of everything that is free we will have our turn. And every now and then I like you to sing to their annoyance one of the songs of Zion, for they sing the songs of Babylon loud enough to annoy us. Let us tell them that while we live in a land of liberty, and rejoice that Christ has made us free, we shall no more be ashamed of his testimonies than they are ashamed of their iniquities. When they begin to sin in private and blush to utter a lewd word, then may be the time—nay, and not even then—for us to keep our religion to ourselves.

Thus you see there are times when men—quiet, reserved men—must speak. They will be traitors if they do not. I do not think this blind man was at all talkative. The brevity of his replies seems to indicate that he was rather a sententious speaker; but they drove him to it. He was like the stag at bay. He must fight, however gently disposed. And I think there is scarcely a Christian man that has been able to go all the way to heaven, and yet quietly hide himself, and run from bush to bush, skulking into glory. Christianity and cowardice! What a contradiction in terms. I think there must have been times when you have felt inclined to say to yourself, "Well now, cost what it may: I may be tabooed in society; I may be ridiculed by the rough, and I may lose respect among the polite; but for Jesus Christ and for his truth I must bear witness." Then has it come true of you, "He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself."

II. We pass on to another remark. IT IS ALWAYS WELL TO BE PREPARED TO SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. This man was evidently ready to do so. When his parents said, "Ask him: he shall speak for himself,"—I think there was a little twinkle of the father's eye as he spoke,—meaning to say, "You will catch a Tartar. He *can* speak for himself. We have known him a good many years

while he has been blind and he has always had a pretty sharp reply for anybody that thought him a fool; if you imagine now that you will get much out of him, by way of food for your mirth or fun, you are mightily mistaken. He will be more likely to spoil you than you to spoil him.” And as they handed him over to the inquisitors, though they were unkind, I suppose they did not feel that he was a tender chicken that needed much of their care; so they seemed to say, “He is of age, he has come to years of maturity; ask him. *Only ask him*. He will speak for himself, we warrant you.” And so indeed he did. Now I want to have a band of Christian people here much of that sort—who when asked anything about their holy faith can so answer that they are not likely to be often the butts of ridicule and scorn, because they shall prove more than a match for their adversaries. But how, you will be ready to ask, are we to be prepared to speak for ourselves?

On the outset it is well to cultivate *a general habit of openheartedness and boldness*. We have no need to intrude and push ourselves into people’s way and so become a nuisance and a bore to them. Far from it; but let us walk through the world as those who have nothing to conceal, conscious of the integrity of our own motives and the rightness of our heart before God; not needing to wear armour and sleep in it like the knights of old, knowing rather that truth unarmed is the best apparel. Let us show that we have nothing to cloak or cover, nothing to disguise or keep dark—that the gospel has wrought in us such an honesty and frankness of spirit that no blab can make us blush, no foe can cause us fear. Let us tell what we believe as true, because we can vouch for its verity. Let us choke those who cavil at these things, not so much by our combats as by our character. Let us prove to them that we have a solid reason for our simple protest; that we have actually received the grace in which we earnestly believe. Our words will have weight when they see that the fruit of our piety accords with the flower of our profession. There is great power in this manner of answering the adversary.

Take heed however, when you do speak, *to be sure of your ground*. This man was. “Whether he be a sinner or no,” says he, “I know not;” so he offered no opinion on a subject of which he could not be quite positive. But where he had hard fact on his side there was nothing vague in his statement—“One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” This is an argument which the most astute caviller would find it difficult to answer. As the blind man looked them full in the face it was enough to bewilder them. And there are some of you in whom such a change of character has been wrought that you could verily say, “I know I am not the man I used to be. My manner of life from my youth is well known to many, if they would testify. But now God, by the gospel of his Son, has opened my eyes, renewed my heart, cleansed my leprosy, and set my feet in the way of peace.” Even those who scoff at the gospel are, in the cases of many of us, unable to deny the remarkable and beneficial change it has wrought. There is a rectitude here about

which we need be very rigid. Put your foot down and say, “No, you cannot misjudge this. You may philosophize, if you like, but the old-fashioned simple gospel of the children it was that changed me, and made me love that which before I hated, and hate that which before I loved. That is a thing you cannot gainsay. One thing I know.”

And it is well, like this man, *to have the facts ready to adduce*. “A man named Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and sent me to the pool to wash, and I washed, and I came seeing.” Let them have the plan of salvation, as you first perceived it, very succinctly and plainly put before them. It is often the very best answer you can give to those who question in order to carp and discuss with a view to disparage. Let them have it with the thrill you had it at the time. As the Lord has dealt with your soul so tell them what he has done for you. He must be a hard-hearted man who can sneer at the simple statement of your own conversion. The change it has wrought in you will be a fact which he cannot meet. Though he should think you deluded and call you an enthusiast, there is nothing so difficult for him to grapple with as your candour and confidence. “He opened my eyes.” There is the point. “He opened my eyes; and if he opened my eyes, then he was of God. God must have been in such a matter as that, for I was born blind.” Give a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear, to all those who oppose you.

Christian men should at all times, also, be as this man was—*quite ready to bear abuse*. “Thou wast altogether born in sin.” I do not suppose the blind man cared one atom what they had to assert or to insinuate on that score. Their scorn could not deprive him of his sight. He merely shook his head and said, “I can see; I can see. I was blind, but now I see. Pharisees may abuse me, but I can see. They may tell me I am this, that, and the other, but I can see. My eyes are open.” So, child of God, you may often say to yourself, “I may be ridiculed: I may be twitted as Presbyterian, or Methodist; Baptist or Schismatic, or whatever they like; it does not matter. I am saved; I am a changed man. The grace of God has renewed me; let them call me what they like now.” Some people are very sensitive of satire, they shrink from and seem chafed at a jest, and what men call “chaff” grates upon them. What a baby a man is who cannot brave a fool’s laugh! Stand upright, young man, and when you go back to that drapery establishment show a bold front. You that go to work at some of the big factories, and have been quizzed and bantered because of your religion, screw up your courage and say, “Here I am, five feet ten high, or six feet, or whatever else it may be, and shall I be ashamed to be laughed at for Christ?” Pooh! Well, you are not worth the boots you stand upright in if you are put down by their play. I have no doubt many a soldier in the barrack room finds it hard to keep up his spirits when comrades taunt him with scoff and scorn in their rough way; but after all, dear friends, should not common manliness nerve us with fortitude? When

we have got hold of a thing that we believe to be right, we should be green-horns to let it go for fear of a giddy prank or a paltry grimace. Let them laugh. They will be tired of teasing us when they find out that our temper triumphs over their senseless tricks. Let them find merriment if they can, poor simpletons. I sometimes feel more inclined to smile than to sadden over the jokes that are coined at my expense. Their playful sallies may relieve some of the pitiful sorrows that light unawares on their lonely hours. Melancholy holds carnival in this mad world. Ghosts and goblins haunt the merriest brain. What if for once now and then they get a living object for their sport, and I myself become the butt of their buffoonery—there is no fear that it will harm me; the only danger is that it will hurt them. Be you of that mind, dear friends, and do not care for any of their raillery.

This born-blind man whose eyes were opened was prepared to meet the Pharisees and speak up for himself, because he felt intense gratitude to him who had bestowed on him the priceless boon of sight. You see, all through the narrative, that though he did not know much about Jesus, he felt conscious that he was his true friend, and he stuck to him through thick and thin. Now, you and I may not know much about our lord—not one tenth of what we hope to know—but he has opened our eyes; he has forgiven our sins; he has saved our souls; and by his grace we will stick to him, come what may. If your gratitude to him be always at its full heat, I am not afraid but whenever you are taunted, whenever at any time you are put to the test, you will be faithful to your friend and able to say with a sound conscience,—

“I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend his cause;
Maintain the honour of his word,
The glory of his cross.”

III. EVERY SAVED MAN SHOULD WILLINGLY SPEAK FOR HIMSELF ABOUT CHRIST. I have said that you will be driven to it. I have also bidden you to be prepared for it when you are driven to it; but now I have to urge that *you ought willingly to do it*.

Are we not all debtors to Christ if, indeed, he has saved us? How can we acknowledge that debt if we are ashamed of him? His testimony is—“He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.” Does the baptism save us? Nay, verily, but he that believes is bound to be baptized that he may thus confess his Lord; for baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God. It is the disciple’s grateful response to his Master’s gracious call. You know how it is put—“He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved.” I may not lawfully forbear to confess if I inwardly believe. Why should I? If I owe so much to him shall I, can I, think of not confessing him? I am sure if there were a commandment issued that we were not to own our Lord, that we were to tell no man, that we must hide

the secret from kinsfolk, friends, and neighbours,—to me it would be most distressing. But now doth he bid us own him and bear our testimony to him. We hail the command, we account it most seemly and fitting, and we cheerfully obey it. Is it not so?

How ought we each willingly to speak up for Christ, because we each one of us know most about what he has done for us. No one here knows all that he has done for me. I think I hear you say, “’Tis true, but then you do not know what he did for us.” No, no; we are over head and ears debtors to him. Oh, what mercy he has shown to some of us. If the world could know our state before conversion it might almost make our hair stand upon end to read the story of our lives. How the grace of God has changed us! O what a change! What a change! Should ravens become doves, and lions become lambs, your sciolists might expound or mystify the phenomenon in a word or two of Greek terminology. But this conversion comes across us every day; and scientific men are silent, while scoffers meet it only to make mouths at it. The change is infinitely greater than when dry bones are raised and clothed with flesh. When stones begin to melt and run into streams, it is nothing in point of marvel to the regeneration we have experienced. We must tell it; we must talk about it. We know more about it than others, and we are bound to be the honest narrators of the wondrous narrative.

The more individual testimonies are borne to Christ the more weight there is in the accumulated force of the great aggregate. If I in the mass bear witness for Christ, in the name of you all, saying, “The Lord hath done great things for *us* whereof we are glad,” I hope there is some honour to Christ and some influence to take effect. But if ten, twenty, thirty, fifty were to rise one after the other and say, “The Lord hath done great things for me,” and each one were to tell his own tale, how much more conviction would be wrought. I have heard of a lawyer in the United States who attended an experience meeting amongst his neighbours. He was a sceptic, if not a thorough unbeliever, when he entered the place, but he sat with his pencil and took notes of the statements of his neighbours. When he afterwards reviewed the evidence he said to himself, “Now, if I had these twelve or thirteen persons in the witness-box on my side, I should feel quite sure of carrying my case. I live among them. They are not the most learned people I ever met with, but they are very honest, trustworthy people—plain spoken; and though each one has told his tale they all come to the same point, and all bear witness to one fact, that there is such a thing as the grace of God, and that it does change the heart. Well,” said he, “I am bound to believe it after all this testimony.” And he did believe, and he became a Christian. Of this I am certain, that if Christian people were more often to bear their testimony to the power of Jesus Christ in their hearts, the cumulated witness would tell on many a thoughtless mind, and multitudes would come to believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit delights to own and bless such true stories as you can tell.

Do I hear one and another of you say, "They can do without my story"? Nay, my friend, I would answer, we cannot dispense with your evidence, because the diversities of their experience are as numerous as the individuals converted, although there is unity in the operation of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord opened the eyes of many blind men, he unstopped the ears of many deaf people, he loosed the tongues of many that were dumb, and we cannot count how many lepers he cleansed; but each patient could tell you his own symptoms and the minute particulars of his own healing. Your story, too, has its special interest while it contributes to the general narrative. At least, you would be sorry if it were not so. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." I know you would like your name to be mentioned then; and I think it would be worth your while now to mention the mercies you have received in just the manner you received them. To speak for myself, I believe that God in converting me manifested a way of his own that exactly suited my need. My case was so like yours as to produce sympathy, and so unlike as to provoke special gratitude, and thus it was doubtless with each one of you. Your career, your character, your circumstances differed in each instance. As a great master seldom paints the same picture twice, so the Master-artist, God, seldom, I think never, works precisely the same in any two hearts. There is a difference, and in that difference there is an illustration of the manifold wisdom of God; therefore, we want your story.

Besides, your testimony may touch the heart of somebody like yourself. Little Mary over yonder says, "Well, I am nobody; only a nurse-maid. The Lord Jesus Christ has cleansed me and made me his, 'tis true, but you can do without my tale." No, Mary, we cannot. Perhaps your testimony will exactly suit another little lass like yourself. A little maid waited on Naaman's wife. Who but she could have told her mistress that there was healing for Naaman or that he could go to a prophet in Israel and be made whole? Tell your story gently and quietly and at proper times, but let it be known. "Oh," says the old man, "but I am so feeble now. You could dispense with my saying anything." No, father William, we cannot. You are just the man whose few words have full weight. You meet every now and then with choice opportunities of leading souls to the Saviour. "I am too old to think about these things," says one; but you might tell how the Lord has dealt with you in your old age, and may be it will strike home. Why, you working men, if you were all to speak up for Christ, as I know many of you do, what an effect would be produced: what an influence you would have on others like you. Of course when they hear us preach they say, "Oh well, you know, he is a parson. He says it professionally. It is his business to say it." But when you tell of what the Lord has done for you, it becomes the talk: it is repeated over and over again. I know what Tom says when he gets home. He says to his wife Mary, "What do you think of that Jack that I have been working with? Why, he has

been talking to me about his soul, and he says his sin is forgiven him, and he seems such a happy man. You know that he used to drink and swear the same as I do, but oh, he is a wonderfully different man now; and I should say, from what I see, there must be something in it. Well, he asked me home the other night, and his place is so different from ours.” “There, you hold your tongue,” Mary will answer up pretty sharply: “if you brought your wages home to me regularly every week, I could lay them out for you better.” “Ah,” says he, “and that is what I have been thinking. It is just because he is a religious man that he does bring his wages home, and I think there is something real about his conversion, do you know. He does not drink as I do. He does not mix up with all manner of larks and follies. I should not have thought so much of it had the parson spoke to me. But now I really do think there is something good and genuine in the *grace* he talks about. You and I had better go next Sunday evening to the Tabernacle, or somewhere else, and hear about it for ourselves.” Ah, there are many, many souls brought to Christ in that way. We cannot do without your testimony then, Jack, because your conversation is suitable to your own class. And you, your ladyship, you say, “I love the Lord, but I do not think I possibly could say anything in my circle and walk of life.” Could not you? Ah, but I am sure you will easily surmount this little difficulty if you attain a little more growth in grace. We had one among us whose rank entitled her to move in an upper sphere of “society,” but her choice enabled her to prefer the humble companionship of the church. Her silvery locks some of you well remember. She has left us now. She has gone home to glory. Amongst the aristocracy her lot was cast. Yet with gentle, quiet, bland simplicity she introduced the gospel wherever she went. Many and many have come to these pews to listen to your minister who had never been here but for her calm, beautiful, unobtrusive, holy life, and the nerve with which, anywhere at any time, she could say, “Yes, I am a Christian; what is more, I am a Nonconformist; and what you will think worse, I am a Baptist; and what you will think worst of all, I am a member of the Tabernacle.” She never blushed to own our blest Redeemer’s name, nor yet to acknowledge and befriend the lowliest of his disciples. Her faith ye do well to follow. In whatever circle we move let us strive to become centres of influence.

Thus have I tried to show you, dear friends, that each one has a witness to bear—a privilege to be prized no less than a duty to be discharged—because a gift you have received qualifies you for a service you are asked to render. Suppose that the soldier when he marched to battle were to say, “I need not load my gun; I need not fire in the day of battle, seeing that on the right and on the left there are good marksmen picking off the enemy.” Yes, but when you are in full musketry fire your bullet has got its billet and the billet for your bullet is not the billet for any other bullet, therefore let it go, let it go. We must all fire, brethren; not some, but all must fire, and our charge

must be this, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind now I see. Therefore do I bear witness to my Lord. Let who will gainsay it, he has opened my eyes.”

IV. Lastly, AS EVERY CHRISTIAN, BEING OF AGE, HAS TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF; we mean to do it; we mean to do it. For my own part, I mean to do so. That which I believe to be true I have spoken to you from my youth up. I have offended a good many at times. I shall offend a good many more, I hope, because that is not a matter I have ever taken into consideration. Is this true? Is it a necessary truth? Is it essential that it be spoken plainly and published widely? Away it goes like a hand-grenade flung into the midst of the crowd. May every minister of Christ—and I trust the rightness of the thing will be more and more recognized—take courage to speak for his Master; speak out, never with bated breath, but in the name of him that sent him, in the name of God, with a courage that befits his commission. A trembling lip and a coward countenance in a minister show him to be unworthy of the office which he pretends to sustain. We must set our faces like a flint and bear testimony to the truth—to the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as far as God shall teach it to us.

And will not you, my fellow-members, and you Christian people here of all sorts, will not you also take up this resolution—“We are of age, and we mean to speak for ourselves”? You cannot all preach. I hope you will not all try. What a world of tumult and disorder we should have if every man and woman felt a call to preach. We should have a church all mouth, and then there would be a vacuum somewhere. There would be no hearers left if everybody turned preacher. No, it is not to seek precedence in public assemblies, but to exert influence in private society that you are called; by a good conversation, with a speech seasoned with salt, at home among friends, kinsfolk, or companions, to the dozen or to one, make known what love has done, what grace has done, what Christ has done. Make it known; make it known. Among your servants, among your children, among your tradespeople—wherever you go make it known; make it known. Wear your regimentals wherever you go. I do not like to see a Christian soldier ashamed to show the scarlet. Oh, no, put it on. It is an honour to serve his Majesty. If there is anything in Christianity that you are ashamed of, get out of it. Do not pretend to believe if you are afraid of betraying your profession: but if you do receive the gospel, and believe it, as the revelation of God, never blush to own it, but be brave to avow it at all times and in all places.

“Well,” says one, “I am so retiring.” I know you are, brother. Come, then, drop a little of your modesty and distinguish yourself a little more for your manliness. Have I not sometimes told you of the soldier who was retiring in the day of battle; but they shot him for a coward. It will not do to be retiring when duty shall urge, or where danger shall summon you to the front. I have heard of a man with the face of a lion and the heart of a deer. Beware of a

too retiring disposition. Disreputable things are sometimes disguised in words polite; so diffidence may be dastardly, and caution may be cowardly. Be thou valiant for thy Lord and Master; play not the traitor's part by thy silence as thou wouldst scorn to do it by thy speech—

“Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend,
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.”

Break the ice then now, and speak to somebody about this blessed message before you go to rest. Will you resolve to do so? Take care that you defer not till your heart grows cool, and the words you purpose freeze on your lips. Nay, but do it, and the thing will grow upon you. Presently you will greet the opportunity as much as you now shrink from the necessity. It will bless your life. I think it is Horatius Bonar who says—

“He liveth long who liveth well!
All else is being flung away;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.

“Be what thou seemest; live thy creed;
Hold up to earth the torch divine;
Be what thou prayest to be made;
Let the great Master's steps be thine.

“Fill up each hour with what will last;
Buy up the moments as they go;
The life above, when this is past,
Is the ripe fruit of life below.

“Waste not thy being; back to him
Who freely gave it, freely give;
Else is that being but a dream,
‘Tis but to *be* and not to *live*.”

Dear friends, some of you who are believers in Christ have never yet confessed him. I hope that you will resolve from this night to avow yourselves his disciples and become his faithful followers. You are of age. “Yes,” says one, “I am of rather full age; for I am over fifty.” Others of you are older than that, and though you are believers in Christ you have never confessed him. It will not do, brother it will not do. It will not do to die with; it does not do to think of now. When he cometh, happy shall they be that were not ashamed of him; but when he cometh in his glory with all his holy angels, trembling shall take hold on those that thought and said they loved him, but never dared to bear reproach for his name's sake or to suffer shame for the gospel. I hope these reflections will make you very uneasy, and constrain you to say, “Please God, I will join a Christian church before this week is

over.” If you are a believer in Christ I charge you not to trifle with the voice of conscience, but to pay your vows to the Most High.

Alas! Alas! There are some that cannot speak for Christ in any way whatever, because they do not know him. He never opened your eyes. Never try to talk of matters you do not understand, nor pretend to bear witness to mercies you have not experienced. Remember the Christ we preach is not only the Christ of history who was crucified dead and buried, but he is a living Christ at this moment, among us still by his Spirit—changing our natures, turning and guiding the current of our thoughts and our lives, purifying our wishes and motives, teaching us to love each other, admonishing us to be pure, entreating us to be gentle, giving us a heart to aspire after those things that are above instead of grovelling among those things that are below. Now, if you have never met this Christ you cannot bear witness as to his power. But he is to be found. Trust in him. He is divine—the Son of God. His blood is the blood of the great sacrifice, whereof Moses spoke and of which all the prophets bare witness. He is the last great sacrifice of God. Come and trust him. And when you trust him, that trust shall be like the woman’s touching of the hem of his garment. No sooner had she touched him than she was made whole, for virtue went out of him. That virtue goeth out of his sacred person still whenever the simple touch of faith brings the sinner into contact with the Saviour. The Lord lead you to believe in Jesus, and when you have believed through grace, come forward and confess his name. So shall you be numbered with his saints now and in glory everlasting.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John ix.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—397, 674, 670.