

A TASK FOR 1958

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Psalm 107:2.

With the opening of another year, the thoughts and prayers of Christian people will be turned toward the task of being the best for God throughout the year to which He has brought us. This task of being the best has never been an easy matter; and, in days of increasing materialism and abounding selfishness, the Christian is faced with an opportunity of service hedged about by every kind of worldly problem and subtle difficulty. In such a setting it is obviously difficult to decide what must be our prime duty as we seek to discharge our obligations to our Lord; so I want to talk to you about one of the things which has always been paramount in the life of discipleship, though never easy.

My theme is that of witnessing for our Lord, in a day when the masses of the people are ignorant of His claims and unresponsive to His love. By Christian witness we must think of more than lip testimony. Let us try to catch the strains of the Psalmist who wrote, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

The challenge that rings from these well-known words ought to find a response in the heart of every believer; and if such a response be forthcoming from us all, these words will be found to usher in a year of such open witness and testimony as we have not yet seen--a year of nailing the colors to the mast in every wind. After all, if we can succeed in doing this for a whole year, we shall have learned the art of doing it for life--and that is expected of us by our Lord, and demanded of us in His Word. Do we not read, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16), and have we not all responded to the prayer, "O Lord, open Thou our lips" by declaring that "our mouths shall show forth Thy praise"? If this can be our greatest task, as it is most certainly our highest privilege, we shall face the year ahead of us with something to do and something to enjoy.

I wonder if we have realized sufficiently that this task of Christian testimony is the plain duty of every Christian, and not the sole responsibility of ministers. In His closing commission to His disciples our Lord said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

This very last command was to be observed by all Christians. The whole family of God must learn afresh to obey this command, and not leave to the ministry the task of Christian testimony. Every Christian is responsible, under God, to bear his testimony.

I. The Condition Of Testimony.

"The redeemed of the Lord" are the only ones who can testify for Him. To redeem means to buy back. That is what Christ has done for us. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:18-19). The whole message of the gospel centers around the fact of redemption by Christ on the cross.

It is the redeemed of the Lord who are to "say so." No one else has anything to say that can in any sense be regarded as Christian testimony. Only sinners saved by divine grace have a witness to bear.

II. The Command To Testify.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." In this wonderful Psalm this urge breaks forth repeatedly in the sentence, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" This urge courses through the whole of Scripture, gathering up the increasing glory of the divine record, so that it constitutes an increasing obligation to potent witness.

We are all familiar with the story in Mark 5, of the man who expressed a desire to remain with our Lord after his miraculous healing. No doubt our Lord would have been delighted with his company, but there was a greater task to do. Quite simply, it was that of Christian testimony--"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." That was his first duty, and was to remain his main duty. In fact, it was the only duty that our Lord laid upon him in that hour.

This testifying, then, is a clear command from God. To disobey it is to miss the best form of service, and the secret of the soul's strengthening in the daily walk. "And they overcame him (i. e., the devil) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11). You cannot witness well and live badly.

III. The Content Of True Testimony.

What do the redeemed have to say? They have an experience to tell. Many would be saved if the redeemed would tell their experiences. We can tell our experiences. This is the most effective work a redeemed person can do. Moreover, the redeemed have a gratitude to express. Furthermore, they have a recommendation to make. Knowing the Saviour who forgave their sins, saved their souls, comforted their hearts and gave them strength for the battles of life, they deem it a pleasure to recommend Him to others.

How are the redeemed to bear their testimony?

1. In worship.

Our corporate worship is the finest and best way of discharging our task of testimony, provided we really worship and not merely attend a service. While we enter the family of God as individuals, we cannot live the family life as individualists. The task of testimony was committed to the early church, and not separately to every individual in isolation. Thus the foundation of testimony is worship. We need to secure within our churches a much larger expression of this corporate aspect of our testimony.

2. In witness.

A witness is one who knows something and is willing to tell it. A witness for Christ is one who tells another what he knows about the Saviour with a view to winning him to a saving knowledge in Him.

A splendid example of a Christian witness is given in John 9, where the man who had been born blind introduced his testimony with the words: "One thing I know." It is our business to let

it be known to all that we are His. When Christians are playing their part in the family witness, they do not find the personal witness difficult; but if we neglect the privileges of the family and go in for individualism, we have deserted the God-given background against which the personal witness of the lips is best given.

3. In walk.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of a consistent walk in daily living. To Abraham God said, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Our walk is primarily before the Lord, but, of course, also before the world. This walk must be consistent if it is to reinforce the testimony of our lips and make its proper contribution to the corporate testimony of the family.

It is significant that in John 12, after the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, the people came not only to see the Lord Jesus, but "that they might see Lazarus also whom He had raised from the dead." In seeing Lazarus they saw the proof of the claim which they had heard previously, that Lazarus had been raised. In seeing you and in seeing me, the world must see the proof of the claim that we have been brought from death into life.

Rise, then, to your task, O Christian, for 1958 is already upon us, a gift from God presenting us with a call from God, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" in worship, in witness and in walk.