

REVERENCE IN TESTIMONY

(Discourse by J. G. Kuehn, 1916 Convention Report beginning on page 258.)

It seems very good that an especial day has been set apart as “Reverence Day.” The text printed on our program—“Our God is in the Heavens,” brings to our minds the thought of the greatness of Jehovah. As we think of space, think of the immensity of space, we marvel at God’s wonderful arrangement in that great large space, a space far beyond our comprehension, and we of the earth as dust in comparison, surely the thought of reverence comes to our hearts and minds. The fact that God is pleased to hear our prayer, the fact that we have been invited to come to the throne of grace “courageously,” the fact that we are practicing this coming to our Heavenly Father freely, has perhaps been the cause of our not being quite so reverential in our approach to God in the glorious privilege of coming to the very throne of grace, the very courts of Heaven, as we should be and as we all want to be. So then if this service of today can bring to our hearts, to our minds a greater appreciation of God’s greatness, the day has been well spent. The blessing which will come to us because of such appreciation will be rich, will be multiplying as these thoughts develop and fill our minds and as we make them more and more our own.

We get a glimpse, dear friends, of God’s grandeur and the glory of His kingdom, in the establishment of His typical kingdom with the Jews. You remember that imagination so well pictured in the Bible how that the mount where God approached unto the children of Israel was moved, was covered with smoke, the awful lightnings, the great thunders and the grand sights, so much so that even the Apostle Paul speaking of the matter, calls attention to Moses’ experience, that Moses greatly feared and quaked. Dear friends, we are living in the day of which the Bible tells us that “once again God will move the earth, and not the earth only, but also the Heavens.” Surely it being the case that we are living in this very time of moving the heavens and the earth, our hearts should and do arise in reverence, in worship and adoration of Jehovah, our God. To think that we have been singled out, we the Church of the Gospel Age, have been singled out to give us a kingdom which cannot be moved is beyond human comprehension and almost more than faith can grasp, therefore the apostle writes in this letter that we should hold fast to the grace wherein we can serve God acceptably, pleasing to God.

Reverence in Testimony. It has been said, and well said, we believe, that testimony consists of evidence, that testimony is the statement of a fact, that testimony is an affirmation, and indeed we find that these definitions fit the case well—evidence. A Christian is a testimony, a witness to all men at all times. The apostle tells the Church that they are epistles written in our hearts known and read of all men. It is the statement of the Scriptures that the Church is the salt of the earth, the preserving influence of the earth. It is said in the Scriptures that the Church is the light of the world. Now surely if

we are the light, if we are the salt, if we are an epistle known and read of all men, we are giving a glorious testimony of God's spirit working in us, the glorious testimony that a power, God's power, is doing a work in our hearts, which is being made manifest, manifest even unto the world of mankind. "Ye are our epistles, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." Have we this experience, dear friends? Do we realize that as we go about our business, in our homes, among our neighbors, that they are watching us? That they are observing what we are doing and what we are not doing? Whether they say so or do not say so, nevertheless this is a fact. Can we, in being thus observed, known and read of all men, can we have our hearts filled with that grateful reverence to God in realizing the privilege of thus being ambassadors for the glorious kingdom to come? And as we do so, are we able by God's grace to walk, to deport ourselves with becoming dignity so as to give a proper testimony of that glorious kingdom? Indeed, dear friends, by God's grace we can do this—and we are doing it. The Bible tells by the pen of St. Peter something about our walk among men now, and that this conversation or walk among men now will have a glorious fruitage in the age to come. Evidently, dear brother, dear sister, in our Christian experience we have the privilege, the opportunity of testifying in the sense of giving evidence of God's grace in us. The words of St. Peter are: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak of you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." What a marvelous privilege then it is for us to be thus epistles, known and read of all men. And how many that should prayerfully come to the dear Heavenly Father at the beginning of every day asking for grace and wisdom that we may indeed prove true epistles, prove that God's power is working in us.

The little things that come to us, the little disappointments, the little hurts, the little "thises" and the little "thats" which come to us, let us watch these, because they are opportunities, opportunities of showing forth a due reverence, the evidence, the testimony, the witness that God's power is working in us, that God is doing a glorious work in our hearts.

"Ye are the light of the world." Surely we all recognize dear friends, the glorious boon which God has bestowed upon us by giving us a knowledge of things to come. The earth is being shaken, the heavens are being shaken. You and I by God's grace have inside information. The poor world is in darkness indeed, but we have the light so that we can point out to the poor world the reason for the conditions of our day. We can tell them of the presence of the Great King, and we can point out to them that the Lord is now setting up His kingdom, and to those among men who are of a teachable mind we can show the proper course for them to take in the present unrest and the present troublous times the world over, and thus by God's grace we are indeed giving a testimony to all men.

Testimony—a statement of fact. It will not be necessary for us to make a statement of a fact to the Heavenly Father, for He knows, but praise the Lord we have the glorious privilege of using this means of testimony, the statement of a fact, to the brethren, “speaking to yourselves,” as the apostle puts it—the glorious privilege of stating the fact of God’s goodness toward us, God’s merciful kindness toward us. And we tell this to the brethren. We have opportunity for this whenever we meet the brethren, and especially on the nights set apart for praise, prayer and testimony meetings. These are the nights set apart for praise, prayer and testimony meetings. These are the nights when the Heavenly Father seemingly is pouring out the greatest blessing. The most blessed meetings of all the meetings we believe are the regular praise, prayer and testimony meetings. It is a custom among us to have these on the Wednesday evenings of each week, and it is not amiss, dear friends, for us to mention the importance of such meetings. A gathering of this kind, a praise, prayer and testimony meeting, is the most important gathering, meeting, collection of people, of any kind anywhere, because the ambassadors of God are gathering together for communing one with the other of God’s glorious mercy, God’s dealings and their own faith and confidence and their own experience and their own trust in God’s wonderful works and purposes.

The apostle gives a splendid rule for our mid-week testimony, that is, the testimonies which are the special kind of making statements of a fact. He tells us that we should be filled with the spirit, “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart.” As when we go to such a testimony meeting we go in the reverential spirit, worshipping the Heavenly Father, thanking Him in our hearts for the good things He has done for us, anxious to speak of the good things He has done for us during the week, anxious to hear what the Heavenly Father has been doing for the brethren or the sisters of the same class, as we come together and we recount these things. But to make this a profitable meeting it is necessary for us to be filled with the spirit. The natural man is filled with the spirit of self, self-will, self-praise, self-this and self-that. That is the thought in the mind and heart of the natural man. Now we empty ourselves by God’s grace of this selfish spirit and are being filled with His spirit. The apostle in the instructions makes the very positive statement—“Be ye filled with the spirit.” And then if we are thus filled with the spirit, we will do what we can to encourage others and glorify God. If we are filled with the spirit of self we will tell of our troubles and talk of self. “Oh I have had such hard experiences this week. I don’t know just how I am going to get through with my troubles. I am almost ready to give up. Oh, this week has been a bitter week for me. Terrible experiences. I have been so busy. I have so much occupying my mind, distracting me or some one of the family has been sick, or Charlie has been away, or somebody has been hurting me, and troubles galore.” This is not what the apostle is telling us to testify about. He tells us that we should be filled with the spirit of Christ.

Now, what is the spirit of Christ? Why, the spirit of consolation, the spirit of comfort, of helpfulness. And so our testimony meetings should be occasions for telling here about the good works God is doing in our hearts, and if you have had temptations, trials, difficulties, and if as a child of God, you have made them occasions for stepping stones for higher attainments tell it and show that you in your heart have claimed the promise God made that all things work together for our good. So then, if there be sickness in the home or trouble in the family, in business dealings, bank failure, investment failures and so on, you on coming to that testimony meeting with reverence and trust in your heart, will be seeking to show forth the glorious goodness of God, which has caused such things to work out a blessing. The apostle admonishes in these words: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

We know what psalms are—praises together. We know what hymns are—prayer and praises to God and testimonies of God’s goodness to us. But sometimes we may be a little in doubt about spiritual songs and what they are. Well, the grandest, most glorious spiritual song we know, dear friends, is it not the Song of Moses and the Lamb? And when you and I meet and together with others at a prayer and testimony meeting tell the praises of our God, our hearts are just aglow with the glorious message of Moses and the Lamb—Justice and Mercy. We realize and show forth that God’s work is going on in our hearts day after day, and as day after day we progress in the Lord’s way we begin to realize more and more that our position before God is real, is truly one of grandeur.

We begin to realize more and more that God does not look upon us as sinners—great sinners, or that we are to look upon ourselves as unworthy of coming into His presence. In fact we are great sinners, sinners even as others. In fact we are unworthy to come into His presence. But praise the Lord, He has made an arrangement for us by the which we can come to Him and can come acceptably. We are to hold fast the grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with innocence and godly fear, and in which we can claim all the holy promises.

That grace is the precious robe of Christ’s righteousness and our acceptance as members of God’s family in the Beloved, our Advocate. Let us realize the fact more fully day by day, and show it forth more and more in our conversation, in our testimony that we do look upon ourselves from God’s standpoint—new creatures, and that old things have passed away. We should learn more fully to differentiate between ourselves as new creatures in Christ Jesus and the old bodies through which we exercise ourselves. We recognize the responsibility of the New Creature for the sins of the old body, and we realize that the robe of Christ’s righteousness is made to cover these imperfections. And when we find spots and wrinkles on this robe of Christ’s righteousness, we can come to a testimony meeting and there to God’s glory testify that we did have spots and did find fault in our walk during that week, along the line of the special text perhaps of that week,

but that we made application for blotting out, the putting away, the covering of these spots, and so with glad hearts and reverential fear we sing the praises of our God.

We can thus claim a clean standing before God. We can claim it by His grace at the close of each day or at any time for that matter, because by His glorious arrangement we can approach the Heavenly throne and there obtain grace to help in every time of need, at all times. We can claim the high standard which the Father has set before us—“Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

This is our privilege then, dear friends, the exercising of our lips making a statement of facts toward the brethren. We can tell with no uncertain sound of the forgiveness of our sins because of the precious work of Jesus. We can claim Jesus as our Advocate. We can see perhaps some growth in grace and knowledge. We can see a point of doctrine clearer than we did sometime before and we can testify to this as God’s spirit working in us—God’s work in us. We can plant or water, but God alone can give the growth. So then, dear brethren, we we see growth along spiritual lines we have the opportunity, glorious privilege to acknowledge this before God and to testify, to make statements of the fact, not to the world, not to all men, but to the brethren, at testimony meetings or as we have opportunity in private conversation.

(At this point Bro. Kuehn gave opportunity for testimony, and testimonies were given as follows:)

FROM ONE:

I feel thankful to the Lord for all His privileges toward me, and I feel like praising the Lord at all times. I want His praises to be continually in my mouth. This afternoon we are talking about speaking to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. Sometimes in walking along the road and talking one to another different ones have had more or less that experience. Somebody came along and started to talk about these things. That is what the Lord says—speaking to ourselves in psalms and spiritual songs. Sometimes the wife in the house is singing, “I love to tell the story,” singing to the Lord. And we can do this at all times as the Psalmist says. It is a blessed privilege. Sometimes I get so full of the spirit I get to preaching. So we feel at all times, “Bless the Lord at all times. Praise shall continually be in my heart. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.” “Taste of the Lord and see that He is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.” (Psalm 34.) I want to be found faithful.

FROM ANOTHER:

Dear brothers and sisters, I am thankful for the privilege of saying I love the Lord more than I ever did before. I love my glorious Bridegroom, and I am thankful for the robe of

Christ's righteousness, and I am thankful that the Lord is filling me with more appreciation, more reverence and more of a desire to do His will.

TESTIMONY OF AFFIRMATION

Now the third part of our study, that of testimony being an affirmation, an affirmation not to the world, not to the brethren, but to the Heavenly Father. Ah, there is a glorious field for testimony.

The Apostle Paul says: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The work needs to go on both in our hearts and in our heads. We must have a head knowledge of the truth, but only after that head knowledge gets into the heart it works unto salvation, it works in our hearts that confession which is the affirmation that we are truly the Lord's. We prove to the Heavenly Father that we really mean business, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. We come folding our hands in prayerful attitude and pray, "Oh, Lord, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart may be acceptable before Thee, oh my Lord and my God." It is this scrutinizing of our heart's testimony which enables us to see that we are filled "in our hearts" with the Lord's spirit, and to see to it that more and more our thoughts should be, and are such thoughts as would be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. We scrutinize our thoughts, and we will by God's grace not to entertain thoughts which are not pleasing to the Heavenly Father. And as this work of cleansing the thoughts of our hearts proceeds, we will grow in grace and grow in knowledge and will find that the truth, that the good story, that the glorious message which we can affirm and reaffirm and treasure in our hearts will make it the real issue of life, will cause our lips to speak forth unto salvation.

It is a deplorable fact that some for one reason or another do not make use of their privileges of sounding forth the glorious message, of giving voice to the conditions and things which are working in their hearts, and as a result there are many weak, puny, undeveloped. We must sound forth His praises, and if we take God's glorious plan and find our place in it, realize that we have really, truly been justified freely, realize that we have made a full consecration to God, realizing that we have been accepted, and then claiming His precious promises, making these our very own, our lips cannot be sealed. They will speak forth more and more pronouncedly the glorious good message of Jehovah God to you and to me. And then the dear Father, for our encouragement gives us a special message. He used the Prophet Malachi to give this message of encouragement about testimony. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it."

So then the testimony we give to the brethren when we speak one to another is also an affirmation before the Lord for the Lord hearkens and hears it. “And a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.” We are glad, dear friends, that our Heavenly Father has made such a glorious arrangement for us, and surely as we near home, reaching more and more to the place where the consummation of our hopes will come to each of us, in the resurrection change, we are becoming more and more glad, more and more enthused, more and more able to say our God is able to save us. Let us then, dear friends, in our testimonies bear in mind this threefold operation: **(1)** Testimonies to the world,—epistles known and read; **(2)** our actions, our talk, our communications with the brethren, and **(3)** the motives in our hearts which are known to God and God only. He will not leave us nor forsake, but make us “strong in the Lord,” and He will keep us until that glad day when by His grace we shall hear the glorious words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.” Amen.