

The Holy Communion.

A SERVICE OF TESTIMONY.

“**Y**E do show forth the Lord’s death, till He come.” “Ye shall be Witnesses unto Me;” that is, first, before one another, and then to those outside. The old Passover Service, which the Lord was celebrating with His disciples at that last Supper, was the yearly testimony to one another and before God to the great act whereby the people were saved out of Egypt, and became the people separated unto the Lord God. The Holy Communion, in one of its most important aspects, is a testimony together, before one another, and before God, to the one great Act and Gift upon the Cross, whereby we have been saved out of sin and death, and become a people separated *unto God in Jesus Christ*.

I want to make this service, to-day, one of mutual testimony, and praise, and thanksgiving.

Often in Evangelistic Missions, at the close, we have a special meeting for Testimony and Praise, when those who have been saved during the mission, and those who have been blessed, get up and say openly before all, what great things God has done for them. And as one after another rise and give their testimony to God’s saving Grace, and how they have accepted Christ during the mission, all hearts are set on fire and filled with praise and joy. The faith of every one is strengthened, and especially those who have been enabled to get up and confess that Christ has saved them.

Now, we can receive the Lord’s Supper with the intention of making it our personal, and united, act of Testimony.

If you only think of the Communion as a time when Christ feeds your own soul with His Body and Blood, then you come up just as so many individuals; and it is all the same if there are many, or few, who receive with you. For in simple feeding, it does not much matter whether you eat by yourself or with others. Its being a solitary act does not affect its efficiency. But witnessing is a corporate act, you do it together, there must be some before whom you witness and testify. And the more there are who witness together, the stronger is the witness and the greater the power and blessing.

And what is the exact thing to which we witness together? What is it we proclaim or show forth? It is a great fact that is past, but which is the foundation of all that we Christians have and are to-day; the charter of our salvation and liberty—the fact of His Death. “Ye proclaim His Death till He come.”

Our Service, i.e. our Prayer Book, enables us to do this very pointedly and clearly.

I am celebrating and you are receiving with me. When I take the Bread before you all, I say aloud the words of administration, using either the direct form, or speaking to myself as to one receiving, and I say and confess, while you hear and witness to my testimony: “The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for me.” “It preserves my body and soul unto everlasting life.” “I take and eat this (consecrated bread), in remembrance, i.e. testimony that:—‘Christ died for me.’” “I feed on Him (i.e. receive, appropriate Him) in my heart by faith.” “I am thankful.” And I say no “Amen”: for the act of receiving and eating the Bread which has become the sign and symbol of His broken Body is the “Amen.” So I proclaim this fact, and my faith in it, in the most solemn and pointed manner possible; I “set to my seal that God is true,” and that all this is true for me, now and here, before you all. And taking the cup in my hands, I say:—“The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for me.” “It preserves my body and soul unto everlasting life.” “I drink this in remembrance and testimony that:—‘Christ’s Blood was shed for me.’” “I am thankful.”

Then, as you come up to the table together, and one by one receive the Bread and the Wine, taking them in conjunction with the words, you also testify in the same way and in the clearest manner possible:—“The Body was given for me. The Blood was shed for me. It preserves my body and soul unto everlasting life. I take and eat; I drink; in remembrance—as a testimony—that Christ died for me; that His blood was shed for me; I feed on Him in my heart; I am thankful.”

And I am witness to your act of witness; and all your fellow communicants see and hear the testimony which you too have made by a concrete act. We have together and before each other, declared, shown forth, the Lord’s death, and shall go on doing so till He come.

Now the reason and ground of our salvation, and acceptance

with God, is Christ's precious death for us ; i.e. His Body given and broken for us, and His Blood poured out for us upon the Cross :—not our repentance and amended life and good works—and we take our stand on the accomplished fact and in its strength and truth, live our new life, and do all those good works God has appointed for us.

And now every one of us knows where we each stand. We none of us lay claim to greater goodness or greater gifts, on which to stand before God, than the humblest soul amongst us. The body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for each and all of us. His Blood was shed for the greatest and the least of us. No one of us has any secret of salvation other than this, " It preserves my body and soul unto eternal life." There is just one thing we love to remember and confess together, " Christ died for *me* ; Christ's Blood was shed for *me*." And with all our soul we are thankful and assured ; and we praise God.

When the congregation witnesses together in this way, with the very memorials of His Passion, what strong assurance it gives to timid souls. " Has God forgiven all *my* sins ? Is He really satisfied ? Am I really one of His children ?—The Body was given for *me*—The Blood was shed for *me*." I have said it—we all have said it—Can there be any stronger or additional reason given to God or to me ? No. " It preserves my body and soul unto eternal life." " I *am* thankful." I may say now in the words of Isaiah xii. : " I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord ; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away and Thou hast comforted me. Behold God is my salvation : I will trust, and not be afraid. The LORD Jesus is my strength and my song ; He is become my salvation."

In order that the Service may be thus a real service of witness it will be necessary that both minister and people previously prepare and agree to make it so. Would it not be a blessing to the whole congregation, if there were a special Communion Service arranged from time to time—say once a month perhaps—with this definite intention. Presently it would become a thought and purpose always prominent in this Holy Service.

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