

Your Life, Witness, and Testimony

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Tim: Who knows what I might mean by Christian witness?

(from the room) Your life?

Tim: Yeah, your life.

(from the room) Like a testimony?

Tim: Your testimony. And I don't mean testimony like when you talk to somebody about how God saved you specifically. I mean the testimony of your life before the world. What people see when they look at the way you go through life, the way you live in life, the way you behave, the way you conduct yourself, the things you do, the things you say. What it is that others who observe your life do, in fact, observe. What does it look like?

Well, I just want you guys to consider some verses. And I want you to think. What I want you to do is be persuaded first off of this one truth: I want you to be persuaded that what people see in your life affects whether or not the Gospel you preach will save those people. Do you see where I'm coming from? I want you persuaded that even though the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, that the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation in the hands of an unclean vessel loses its power. Can anybody think of a verse that might lend itself to what I'm trying to say? Anybody think of any verse in all the Bible that might teach that? That might give some validity to that truth? Is there anybody here that might think: oh, the Bible doesn't teach that. I heard a preacher one time, I vividly remember him in the pulpit saying your life never saves anybody. And he was emphasizing that it's the Gospel alone that saves and your life never saves anybody. The problem with that statement is it's a kind of yes and no. Is it true? Well, yes and no. Is it not true? Well, yes and no. I mean, you really need to explain that. Obviously, somebody's life without the Gospel isn't going to save people. Now it might create curiosity by which they would want to find out more about the hope you have. It might stir a curiosity that would lead them to ask you about the Gospel. But without the Gospel, the Gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation. We don't want to substitute anything else for that. But listen to this verse. And I think many of you ladies, I don't know if you've dealt with this much or yet in the study that Ruby's been doing on Sunday mornings.

But from 1 Peter 3, just listen to this verse: 1 Peter 3:1-2, "Likewise wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the Word..." in other words, they don't obey the Word - you know what? Somebody who doesn't obey the Word is basically synonymous for what? An unbeliever. That's the idea here: an unbeliever. Do you know what Jesus said? He said to the Jews. You remember this? That if My Word abides in you, what? Then you prove to be My disciples. Basically, in the Scriptures, we find this: If you obey Christ, you give the

clearest evidence that you're truly born again. "...But if some do not obey the Word..." In other words, Peter's referring to a lost husband. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the Word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives."

Now, look, again, we come back to this. When it says, "won without a word," it doesn't mean that the husband doesn't know the way of salvation. It doesn't mean that the husband doesn't realize what the truth is. It means that the wife has come to a place where she's not just jabbing her husband all the time with texts from the Scripture. Not all the time just, you know, putting it pasted up on the mirror for him to come in the morning to shave and "repent!" It's not that kind of thing. It's where he knows the truth his wife believes, but she has gone silent as far as just continuing to aggressively speak to him. Now, she's gone into the mode where she is by a pure life, by conduct that is submissive, and in verse 2 it says, "When they see your respectful and pure conduct..." they're won without the word.

And so, what I want you to see by this, and I realize this is speaking about a wife, but what I would draw from this is you would all have to admit at least the principle is in the Scriptures that your life can be a primary vessel by which somebody lost onlooking can be persuaded to believe your Gospel or not. Would you agree with that? That that text would basically teach that?

Okay, well, now you see the kind of principle I'm driving at. Can anybody else give a verse that might lend itself to the same thing? And I don't wonder that it's hard. Because it is something that I think you have to read the Scriptures. You have to have a mindset to look for texts like that. And some of them aren't as clear as that one.

But here's an example. You guys think about these and see if maybe this doesn't in some way teach something of the same truth. Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world." Now watch. What is Christ talking about when He says you're the light of the world? Where does the light in a Christian's life come from? What is it? (unintelligible) The what in your life?

(from the room) Having the Lord and the Holy Spirit in your life?

Tim: But how so? Did I walk in here tonight and this beam of light shot off my head and hit you between the eyes?

(from the room) By the way you live your life.

Tim: Exactly! We come back to this. We are light, I would say in a combination, right? A combination of how we speak, the truth we utter, and the life we live.

Now, if you have any doubts about that, watch now how Christ develops this. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Okay, what's the idea about a city that's set on the hill?

(from the room) (unintelligible)

Tim: What's that?

(from the room) It's up high.

Tim: It's up high. So that what? Everybody can see it. Now what He's talking about is something people can see. That's clear. "Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way..." Now, when somebody says "in the same way," what He's doing is He's just given us an illustration. He's giving us a comparison here. "In the same way, let your light shine before others." Now, He's going to explain what this light is. "...So that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in Heaven."

Now, how might they give glory to your Father? Let me ask you this. You're supposed to be the light of the world - all you that are true Christians in this room. Jesus says very specifically, "by your works" that's how your life shines. By your works. That what may happen? Who are you shining the light to?

(from the room) The lost?

Tim: It would be the world. Let your shine before... others. See, He's speaking to Christians. And so the "others" would, yes, they would be the lost. They would be the world. Be a light in the world. Basically, you have that term "others." "In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in Heaven." Now how are they going to give glory to your Father?

(from the room) Because they're going to see a difference in you that they don't have.

Tim: Now, let's say this. If somebody sees a difference in your life that they don't see in themselves, just the fact that it happens, do they give God glory?

(from the room) No.

Tim: Let me read to you a text that is very similar to this. Does anybody know where that verse has its closest parallel in the New Testament? It comes out of 1 Peter 2. Now listen to what Peter says. 1 Peter 2:12, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable." Well now, who are the Gentiles? They're the "others." They're the world. They're those that are on the outside. They're the ones that aren't the Israelites or the true people of God or the people of God at all.

"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds..." Again, we have that. They see your good deeds. "...And glorify God..." - now watch this: "...On the day of visitation." Now, that's the same truth, but he adds those words: "on the day of visitation."

What do you make out of that? You know what I make out of that? I basically make out of that that when God comes in saving power, when He visits - you remember how it was - you remember how it was when they dropped that man down through the roof at the feet of Jesus and He healed him? Have you ever read Luke's account in that? And it says there was power there to heal them. And you know what? It makes it sound like there was power there to heal the Jews and they basically despised it. But here's the thing, there are days when salvation drops down from above, when God visits. There are days when God comes close. There are days when God, we see it, there are movements of God, are there not? And what it appears to me is that when God comes in saving power, if they've seen your good works in that day of visitation, they're going to glorify Him by what? Now, they may glorify Him just by admitting - because you see these people are speaking evil against God's people - and there's a day of visitation. You can look at visitation in the Scriptures. Sometimes visitation is wrath. But I can tell you this, that God is glorified when people see our good deeds.

And I have to believe maybe two ways: they'll admit that as much they spoke evil against us, we did do good, and it will glorify God, because did not Jesus Christ say that you glorify His Father when you bear much fruit? He said that. "By this My Father is..." not just a little glorified. He's glorified that you bear much fruit. God is glorified in that when the world sees that - and even if it works to their judgment or works to their salvation. But I believe, I definitely believe, and I've searched that out before. I didn't do it right now, but you might want to just look through the idea and the concept of visitation in the New Testament. It seems like it carries the idea of God coming to show favor. And what do we find? The wife when she lives godly before a lost husband, Peter is saying - remember - these both come from the same book. 1 Peter 2, 1 Peter 3 - the same book. The same writer. And he's talking about the visitation. And he's talking about the onlooking world watching these deeds.

Now, okay, why am I belaboring this? Because you know what? Our church has a testimony in the world. Good or bad, it has one. And guess what the testimony of our church is made up of? It's made up of every one of your testimonies. It's made up of every testimony. It's made up of the witness of every one of you. Your Christian witness or not-so-Christian witness, all of them packed together, the culmination of all of that is the testimony of our church. You guys have a testimony. You ladies have a testimony. In your workplace, in your family. And you know what? You're dismissing Scripture if you say it doesn't matter. You're dismissing Scripture if you say, well, if we've got the right truth, that's all that matters. I'm telling you, Peter is not saying to the wife: all that matters is that you have a pure Gospel. He's not saying that. He's saying that the way you live matters. The way you live affects the onlooking world. And what I've always hoped is that in a day of visitation, people in the community on the east side and throughout our city would know - those people in there are serious. They may not be perfect people, but they love

Christ. They may not be everything that we would expect if we were actually looking at Christ, but they're trying to follow Him. And there's grace in that place. There's righteousness in that place. There's a sense that God is with those people. There's a purity about their lives. There's a love that they have for one another. By this, Christ said, they'll know you're followers of His, that they have love for one another. See, the Scriptures come back to this onlooking world - they're looking, they're looking. They're watching our deeds. They're watching. We, before others, before the Gentiles, before the world, we are basically living out a testimony.

Listen to this. Listen carefully to this. I read this from Charles Spurgeon years back and I have never forgotten it. And I went and searched through his New Park Street Pulpit today and I dug it up.

"There was a young minister once preaching very earnestly in a certain chapel. He had to walk some four or five miles to his home along a country road after the service. A young man who had been deeply impressed under the sermon, requested the privilege of walking with the minister with an earnest hope that he might get an opportunity of telling out his feelings to him and obtaining some word of guidance or comfort. Instead of that, the young minister all the way along told the most singular tales to those who were with him causing loud roars of laughter, and even relating tales which bordered upon the indecent. He stopped at a certain house and this young man stopped with him. And the whole evening was spent in frivolity and foolish talking.

Some years after, when the minister had grown old, he was sent for to the bedside of a dying man. He hastened thither with a heart desirous to do good. He was requested to sit down at the bedside and the dying man, looking at him, and regarding him most closely, said to him, 'Do you remember preaching in such-and-such a village on such an occasion?' 'I do,' said the minister. 'Well, I was one of your hearers,' said the man, 'and I was deeply impressed by the sermon.' 'Thank God for that,' said the minister. 'Stop!' said the man. 'Don't thank God till you've heard the whole story. You will have reason to alter your tone before I am done.' The minister changed countenance, but he little guessed what would be the full extent of that man's testimony. Said he, 'Sir, do you remember after you had finished that earnest sermon, I with some others walked with you? I was sincerely desirous of being led in the right path that night, but I heard you speak in such a strain of levity, and with so much coarseness too, that I went outside the house while you were sitting down to your evening meal. I stamped my foot upon the ground. I said that you were a liar, that Christianity was falsehood, that if you could pretend to be so earnest about it in the pulpit and then come down and talk like that, the whole thing must be a sham. And I've been an infidel,' said he, 'A confirmed infidel from that day to this. But I am not an infidel at the moment. I know better. I am dying. And I'm about to be damned. And at the bar of God, I will lay my damnation to your charge. My blood is on your head.' And with a dreadful shriek and one demoniacal glance at the trembling minister, he shut his eyes and died." And that as I understand it is a true story.

Christian, what is your witness? What do you tell people with your mouth and what do they see with your life? What do they hear from your mouth? What do they see when they go on your Facebook account? Let me tell you something, it can take months and years to establish a pure Christian testimony, and but a moment to demolish it.

Do you remember when Nathan came to David? And he told him this story? "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich, the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb which he had bought. And he had brought it up and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now, there was a traveler that came to the rich man. He was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.' Then, David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die. He shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity.' Nathan said to David, 'You are the man.'" Do you know what Nathan goes on to tell David? "By this deed, you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme."

What I want to tell you is this. When people look at your life, you can be ever so godly and you mess up, you know what? You know what Jesus Christ expects is happening? The world is watching you. Do you know what Peter expects is happening to you ladies? Your husbands are watching you. You know what the Bible tells us is happening? The world is watching. And when we sin against God, when there's impurity in our life, the world sees it. And you know what it allows them to do? Blaspheme. Do you know what it allows them to do? It allows them to dismiss what we have to say. Well, if the Christian lives this way, that's no different than me. They look at your life and they hear things come off your lip, listen, your life is spoken by whatever is associated with you. I mentioned Facebook already. I don't go on all your Facebook accounts. I don't have my own Facebook account. But I'll tell you this, I know through my daughter about the kind of things that people have on there. I've heard from other pastors, I've heard from other people about some of the things some of the people in our church have on theirs.

Can I tell you something? You're in the workplace, guys are telling a filthy joke, and you let that smirk come off your [lips], you know what? People are watching. Whether it's when the joke's being told at work, anything that's connected to you. When people come along, and I'll tell you what, you have people over to your house and they're walking through your house and they glance over and they see a movie on top of your television that is absolutely unfit for a Christian to watch. You can destroy your testimony like that. Like that. You can have somebody like this young man that through your witness in your family, in your workplace, have come under conviction, and all it takes is one thing like that and they'll say, well, if that's what their Christianity amounts to... they'll take it seriously till they see that. And then it's undone. It's destroyed.

I'll tell you this, a true Christian is a rebuke to the onlooking world. When somebody with true Christlike character and a Christian witness walks before them, it is a rebuke. When that dirty joke is told and that Christian turns away and will not laugh at it, it rebukes them all. All their consciences are pricked. But when you laugh too, they can dismiss it. It doesn't matter. Here's the Christian, and it doesn't matter. Folks, your inconsistencies...

And I'll tell you what, the onlooking world... you know what? They're looking for every excuse to be an enemy to God. And you don't have to look far to find excuses to be an enemy of God. But I'll tell you what, when they bring slander against you, let it be for righteousness. Because they hate it. Because it's pricking their conscience. And you remember, when Christ came to Paul on that Damascus road, He said, Paul, you can't resist - what is the King James? The goads, the pricks. He saw Stephen die. You know, it just pricked him. He hated it. He wanted to drag these Christians out, but he saw it. They had a righteousness that he realized that in all of his efforts - and you know what it says in Romans 7. He said once he was alive, but the law came. And that law of God had come to him. And he's looking at these Christians and he's realizing: I try to do what's right and I can't do it. And he's looking at these Christians. He looks at somebody like Stephen and it's just pricking him. And God will use that. You get that husband who begins to look at that wife, and it's just pricking him. He sees it. There's something about her life that is a testimony. And there's a power there. And there's a witness. But you can destroy that witness like that, and all it takes is one of you to really destroy the witness of our church as a whole in the community. Sloppy, inconsistent Christianity, I'll tell you, it will put the world to sleep.

I have been so grieved by something that one of the families in the church recently did when it came to money. Brethren, when we show the world that we're just as covetous as they are, just as stingy and greedy with money as they are, we just kill the witness. Absolutely kill the witness. When we show the world that we're just discontent, we're grumbling all the time, it just kills the witness.

Brethren, we claim to be followers of Him that washed feet. The world a lot of times looks at it and says, "You Christians... You'll gladly have your feet washed. We don't see you really as those that would do the foot washing." When the world looks at us and we look just like them, our witness is dead. We kill it, folks. We come along, we try to tell the world - souls hang in the balance, and then we're all cold. The world looks at us and sees lukewarmness. We try to tell them this is something to be passionate about. This is something to cut off hands and feet and pluck out eyes. This is something to take with violence. And they look at us and see we're all asleep. We really don't want to be that.

Whatever's connected to you, the things you have in your house - Christians, what do you have in your house that dishonors the Lord? The world looks at us. You've got all sorts of ladies, you look just as worldly as the world. Guys, you're just as vain as the guys in this world. You're just as much - worldliness. How worldliness just kills a testimony! But when the world looks and they see there's a difference... Remember what Christ said. By this, the world's going to know that you love one another. I've been so grieved lately. Many different situations in my life I'm seeing

Christians dividing, Christians separating, Christians that can't work together, problems arising. The world looks at that, I'll guarantee you they love that. They can soothe their consciences. A righteous life is a powerful, powerful thing. The Bible would have us to believe that.

You need to be a light. When He says you need to be a light, He's talking about your good works. He says that. He's talking about your Christian witness.

Can you imagine that being a true story? As a preacher myself, to be called to a man's bedside as he's dying and to have him tell me that... But my brothers and sisters, you don't have to be a preacher to have your witness damn men. And you may be more guilty of that than you know. How many bad testimonies of people who visit our churches have been directly responsible for killing some earnestness in the life of somebody lost who came under conviction and eventually walked away? And it wasn't simply because they hardened their own heart, it was because they were aided by the bad testimony of some in our church or some that profess Christ.

Brethren, I earnestly call you: be light. Clean your life. Don't allow filth. Don't allow that which corrupts your testimony in your home, in your workplace, in anything associated with the Internet that you're involved with. Don't have websites, don't have Facebook, don't send out things in the public eye that has anything that's worldly, that's vain, that's corrupt, that's full of that which is indecent. When you're in a place where you don't think people are watching, I guarantee when the world knows you testify to being a follower of Christ, they will be watching. And when you least think they're watching, they will be watching. Don't give the world any excuse to not come to Christ. Don't you be the purpose. And you know the world loves to say the church is full of hypocrites. Don't you be that hypocrite.

And I'll tell you, if you're sitting here lost, and you've ever let the bad testimony of a Christian deter you or be to you an excuse, I would just say this to you: What are you going to say on judgment day? Are you going to say, Lord, I didn't become a Christian, I didn't submit and bow the knee to Christ because of the wickedness of Your children. Are you going to sit there and slander God's children to His face? Are you going to excuse your own wickedness and blame it on His children in that day? God forbid.

Brothers and sisters, Christian witness. It's a powerful thing. It's a very powerful thing. As I've studied history, what I've found, very often, the people with the greatest witness even when their Gospel has been weaker have been more used of the Lord. A pure vessel in the hands of the Lord is a powerful, powerful thing. Please, brothers and sisters, watch your witness. And I say it again, you can destroy it in a second. Repairing it can take years and years and sometimes we do things that like with this man I told you about, it's never healed.

Well, that's what I wanted to say to you tonight. Let your light shine. Others are watching your good deeds. May God give us visitation and may, in that day of visitation, may they glorify the Lord after watching your good deeds. And glorify Him by the witness of your life, them

surrendering to Christ. May that be the way they glorify Him. Well, God help us to have a good witness. Amen.