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DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON.  
A DISCOURSE ON THE DUMB DEVIL.

He Illustrates the Duty Incumbent Upon Christians of Embracing Every Opportunity That Offers to Do Good and Advance the Cause of Christ.

At the Tabernacle.  
In this sermon Rev. Dr. Talmage illustrated, in potent and convincing language, the duty incumbent upon Christians of embracing every opportunity that offers in this life to do good and to advance the cause of the Kingdom of Christ by a bold acknowledgment of their principles before men. The text selected was, Mark ix, 25, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him." Here was a case of great domestic anguish. The son of the household was possessed of an evil spirit which, among other things, paralyzed his tongue and made him speechless. When the influence was on the patient he could not speak a word, articulation was impossible. The spirit that captured the member of the household was a dumb spirit—so called by Christ—a spirit abroad to-day and as lively and potent as in New Testament times. Yet in all the realms of sermonology I cannot find a discourse concerning this member of the household charged upon my text, saying, "Come out of him."

There has been much destructive superstition abroad in the world concerning possession by evil spirits. Under the form of witchcraft this delusion swept the continents. Persons were supposed to be possessed with some evil spirit which made them able to destroy others. In the sixteenth century in Geneva 1,500 persons were burned to death as witches. Under one judge in Lorraine 900 persons were burned to death as witches. In one neighborhood of France 1,000 persons were burned. In two centuries 200,000 persons were slain as witches. So mighty was the delusion that it included among its victims some of the greatest intellects of all time, such as Chief Justice Matthew Hale and Sir Edward Coke, and such renowned ministers of religion as Cotton Mather, one of whose books, Benjamin Franklin said, shaped the life of Richard Baxter, Archbishop Cranmer and Martin Luther, and among writers and philosophers, Lord Bacon. That belief, which has become the laughing stock of all sensible people, counted its disciples among the wisest and best people of Sweden, England, France, Spain and New England. But while we reject witchcraft any man who believes the Bible must believe that there are diabolical agencies abroad in the world. While there are ministering spirits to bless there are infernal spirits to hinder, to poison and to destroy. Christ was speaking to a spiritual existence when, standing before the afflicted one of the text, he said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, come out of him."

And this angel will tell the text, I put you on your guard. Do not think that this agent of evil has put his blight on those who, by omission of the vocal organs, have had the golden gates of speech bolted and barred. Among those who have never spoken a word are the most gracious and the most intelligent souls that ever were incarnated. The chaplains of the asylums for the dumb can tell you enchanting stories of those, who never called the name of father or mother or child, and many of the most devoted and prayerful spirits never in this world speak the name of God or Christ. Many a deaf mute have I seen with the angel of intelligence seated at the window of the eye, who never came forth from the door of the mouth.

What a miracle of loveliness and knowledge was Laura Bridgman, of New Hampshire! Not only without faculty of speech, but without hearing and without sight, all these faculties removed by sickness in her infancy, yet she became a wonder at needier than at the piano, at the sewing machine, and an intelligent student of the Scriptures, and confounding philosophers, who came from all parts of the world to study the obscure one. She thanks to Christianity for what it has done for the amelioration of the condition of the deaf and the dumb. Back in the ages they were put to death as having no right, with such paucity of equipment, to live, and for centuries they were classed among the idiotic and unsafe.

But in the sixteenth century came Pedro Ponce, the Spanish monk, and in the seventeenth century came Jean Pablo Bonet, another Spanish monk, with a typology or the finger alphabet, and in our own century we have had John Braidwood and Drs. Mitchell and Ackerly and Peet and Galladett, who have given uncounted thousands of those whose tongues were forever silent the power to speak on the air by a manual alphabet their rights as citizens of this world and their hopes for the next. We rejoice in the brilliant inventions in behalf of those who were born dumb.

One of the most impressive audiences I ever addressed was in the fall of '87, two or three years ago—an audience of about six hundred persons who had never heard a sound or spoke a word, an interpreter standing beside me while I addressed them. I congratulated that audience on two advantages they had over the most of us—the one that they escaped hearing a great many disagreeable things, and on the other fact that they escaped saying things they were sorry for afterward. Yet after all the alleviations a shackle tongue is an appalling limitation. But we are not this morning speaking of congenital mutes. We mean those who are born with all the faculties of vocalization and yet have been struck by the dumb devil mentioned in the text—the dumb devil whom Christ called when he said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him."

There has been apotheosis of silence. Some one has said that silence is golden, and sometimes the greatest of all things is to keep your mouth shut. But sometimes silence is a crime and the direct result of the baleful influence of the dumb devil of our text. There is hardly a man of a worldly name in this house to-day who has not been present on some occasion when the Christian religion became a target for raillery. Perhaps it was over in the store some day when there were not much going on and the clerks were in a group. Or it was in the factory at the noon spell, or it was on the farm under the trees while you were resting, or it was in the clubroom, or it was in a social circle, or it was in the street on the way home from business, or it was on some occasion when you remember without my describing it

Some one got the laugh on the Bible and caricatured the profession of religion as hypocrisy, or made a pun out of something that Christ said. The laugh started and you joined in, and not one word of protest did you utter. What do you think? Modesty? No. Inequality to answer? No. Lack of opportunity? No. It was a blow on both your lips by the wing of the dumb devil. If some one should malign your father or mother or wife or husband or child you would first speak, and then, with an indignant word or doubled up fist make response. And yet here is our Christian religion, which has done so much for you and so much for the world that it will take all eternity to celebrate its name and when it was attacked you did not so much as say: "I differ, I object, I am sorry to hear you say that. There is another side to this."

You Christian people ought in such cases as these to get armed, not with earthly weapons, but with the sword of the Spirit. You ought to have four or five questions with which you could confound any man who attacks Christianity. A man 30 years old was telling me a few days ago how he put to flight a scoffer. He asked a friend said to the scoffer, "Do you ever read the history of Joseph in the Bible?" "Yes," said the man; "it is a fine story, and as interesting a story as I ever read." "Well, now," said my old friend, "suppose that account of Joseph stood in the Bible?" "Well, now," said the man, "then it would not be entertaining." "Well, now," said my friend, "we have in this world only half of everything, and do you not think that every time we hear the last half things may be concerning you? Then we may find that God was right?"

Oh, friends, better load up with a few interjection points. You cannot afford to be silent when God and the Bible and the things of eternity are assailed. Your silence gives consent to the bombardment. You do not know how to allow a slur to be cast on your mother's dying pillow. In behalf of the Christ, who for you went through the agonies of assassination on the rocky bluff back of Jerusalem, you dared not face a silent man when it was attacked with a few questions so that next time you will be ready.

Say to the scoffer: "My dear sir, will you tell me what makes the difference between the condition of woman in China and the United States? What do you think of the sermon on the mount? How do you like the golden rule laid down in the Scriptures? Are you in favor of the ten commandments? In your large and extensive reading have you come across a lovelier character than Jesus Christ? Will you please name the most intelligent of the heathen deists and atheists? How do you account for the fact that among the out and out believers in Christianity were such persons as Benjamin Franklin, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Babington Macaulay, William Walter Scott, Charles Kingsley, Horace Bushnell, James A. Garfield, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Admiral Foote, Admiral Farragut, Ulysses S. Grant, John Milton, William Shakespeare, Chief Justice Marshall, John Adams, Daniel Webster, George Washington? How do you account for their fondness for the Christian religion? Among the innumerable colleges and universities of the earth will you name me three started by infidels and now supported by infidels? Down your hearthstone, you are in the position you occupy antagonistic to the Christian religion? When do you have the most rapturous views of the next world?"

Go to him with a few such questions and he will get so red in the face as to suggest a monopoly, and he will look at his watch and say he has an engagement and must go. You will put him in a sweat that will beat a Turkish bath. You will put him on a rout compared with which our troops at Bull Run made no time at all. Arm yourself, not with arguments but with interjection points, and I promise you victory. Shall such a man as you, shall such a woman as you surrender to one of the meanest spirits that ever smoked up from the pit—the dumb devil spoken of in the text?

But then there are occasions when this particular spirit that Christ exercised when he said, "I charge thee to come out of him," takes place by the wholesale. In the most responsive religious audience have you noticed how many people will sing all? They have a book, and they have a voice, and they know how to read. They know many of the tunes, and yet are silent while the great raptures of music pass by. Among those who sing not one out of a hundred sings loud enough to hear his own voice. They hum it. They give a sort of religious grunt. They make the lips go, but it is inaudible. With a voice strong enough to stop a street car one block away, all they can afford in the praise of their God is to hum. They have a book, and they have a voice, and they know how to read. They know many of the tunes, and yet are silent while the great raptures of music pass by. Among those who sing not one out of a hundred sings loud enough to hear his own voice. They hum it. They give a sort of religious grunt. They make the lips go, but it is inaudible. With a voice strong enough to stop a street car one block away, all they can afford in the praise of their God is to hum. They have a book, and they have a voice, and they know how to read. They know many of the tunes, and yet are silent while the great raptures of music pass by.

The volume of voice that ascends from the largest audience that ever assembled ought to be multiplied about two thousand fold. But the minister rises and gives out the hymn; the organ begins; the choir or precentor leads; the audience stands so that the lungs may have full expansion, and a mighty harmony is about to ascend, when the evil spirit spoken of in my text—the dumb devil—spreads his two wings, one over the lips of one-half the audience and the other wing over the lips of the other half of the audience, and the voices roll into the throats from which they started, and only here and there anything is heard, and nine-tenths of the holy power is destroyed; and the dumb devil, as he flies away, says: "I could not keep Isaac Watts from writing that hymn, and I could not keep Lowell Mason from composing the tune to which it is set, but I smote into silence or half silence the lips which it would have spread abroad to bless the multitudes of cities, and then mount the wide open heavens." Give the long meter doxology the full support of Christendom, and those four lips would take the whole earth for God.

Do not, however, let us lose ourselves in generalities. Not one of us here has had our lives sometimes touched by the evil spirit of the text—this awful dumb devil. We had just one opportunity of a short or long while to use a Christian life. The opportunity was fairly put before us. The word of invitation or consolation or warning came to the inside gate of the mouth but there it halted. Some rattling power locked the jaws together so that they did not open. The tongue lay flat and still in the bottom of the mouth as though struck with paralysis. We were mute. Some of us had given us the physiological apparatus for speech, and our

lungs were filled with air which, by the command of our will, could have made the laryngeal muscles move, and the vocal organs vibrate, we were wickedly and fatally silent. For all time and eternity we missed our chance. Or it was a prayer meeting, and the service was the prayer meeting, and the remarks, and there was a dead halt—everything silent as a graveyard at midnight. Indeed it was a graveyard and midnight. An embarrassing pause took place that put a wet blanket on all the meetings. Men, bold enough on business exchange or in worldly circles, shut their eyes as though they were praying in silence, but they were not praying at all. They were busy hoping somebody else would do his duty. The woman flushed under the awful pause and made their fans more rapidly flutter. Some brother with no cold coughed, by that sound trying to fill up the time, and the meeting was slain. But what killed it?

This is the way I account for the fact that the stupidest pieces on earth are some prayer meetings. I do not see how a man keeps any grace if he regularly attends them. They are spiritual refrigerators. Religion kept on legs. How many of us have lost occasions of usefulness? In a sculptor's studio stood a figure of the god Opportunity. The sculptor had made the hair fall down over the face of the statue so as to completely cover it, and there were wings to the feet. When asked why he so represented Opportunity, the sculptor answered, "The face of the statue is thus covered up because we do not recognize Opportunity when it comes, and the wings to the feet show that Opportunity is swiftly gone."

But do not let the world deride the church because of all this, for the dumb devil is just so conspicuous in the world. The two great political parties will soon be in the platform for the Presidential election. The platform is a committee of each party will be appointed to make the platform. After proper deliberation the committees will come in with a ringing report, "Whereas" and "Whereas" and "Whereas." Pronouncements all shaped with the one idea of getting the most votes. All expression in regard to the great moral evils of the country ignored. No expression about the liquor traffic, for that would lose the rum vote. No expression in regard to the abolition of the slave, for the denunciation of the Lord's day. No recognition of God in the history of this nation for that would lose the vote of atheists. But "Whereas" and "Whereas" and "Whereas." Nine cheers will be given for the platform. The dumb devil of the text will put one wing over the Republican platform and the other wing over the Democratic platform. There is nothing involved in the next election except offices. The great conventions will be opened with prayer by their chaplains. If they avoid platitudes and tell the honest truth in their prayers they will say: "O Lord, we want to be postmasters and consuls and foreign ministers and United States district attorneys. For that we are here, and for that we will give you our vote next November. Give us office or wedie, forever and ever Amen."

The world, to say the least, is no better than the church on this subject of silence at the wrong time. In other words, it is not time for the church to become pronounced and aggressive as never before? Take sides for God and sobriety and righteousness. "If the Lord be God, follow Him, if Baal, then follow Him." Have you opportunity of rebuking a sin? Rebuke it. Have you a chance to cheer a disheartened man? Cheer it. Have you a useful word to speak? Speak it. Be out and out, and down, for righteousness. If your ship is afloat on the Pacific Ocean of God's mercy, hang out your colors from masthead. Show your passport if you have one. Do not smuggle your soul into the harbor of Heaven. Speak out for God! This morning close up the chapter of lost opportunities and pitch it into the East River and open a new chapter. Before you get to the top of your way out the morning shake hands with some one, and ask him to join you on the road to Heaven. Do not drive up to Heaven in a two-wheeled "salty" with room only for one, and that yourself, but get the biggest Gospel wagon you can find, and pile it full of friends and neighbors, and shout till they hear you all up and down the skies. "Come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath promised good concerning Israel."

The opportunity of good which you may consider insignificant may be tremendous for results, as when on sea Capt. Holdane swore at the ship's crew with an oath that wished them all in perdition, and a Scotch sailor touched his cap and said, "Captain, God hears the prayers of the poor, and a minister of the Gospel, and under his ministry the godless Felix Neff became the world renowned missionary of the Cross, and the worldly Merle Laubigne became the author of 'The History of the Reformation' and will be the glory of the church for all ages."

Perhaps you may do as much as the Scotch sailor who just tipped his cap and used one broken sentence, by which the earth and the heavens are still resounding with potent hymns. Do something for God, and do it right away, or you will never do it at all. Time flies away fast. The while we never remember; The while we would be gladly off; Grows old with the year That dies with the next December.

Sign Beant Figures.  
The sun gives 600,000 times as much light as the moon; 7,000,000,000 as much as the brightest star, and 36,000,000 as much as all the stars combined give to the earth. In size the sun equals 1,300,000 earths, but, owing to its smaller density, its weight equals only 300,000 earths. According to Clark the earth is 3,963,296 miles thick at the equator and 3,959,731 miles at the poles. A single bee, with all its industry, energy and the innumerable journeys it has to perform, will not collect more than a teaspoonful of honey in a single season, yet the total weight of honey taken from a single hive is often from 60 to 100 pounds—a profitable lesson to man of great results from united labor.

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