

Thou art permitted to speak for thyself (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Wood, Clement (1920-2010)

[0 : 00] In dependence upon thee, Lord, for all needed help, I venture to draw your prayerful attention to Acts chapter 26 and a part of verse 1.

Acts chapter 26 and a part of verse 1. Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.

Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.

It is no small mercy that the day of religious liberty is still granted to us in the land that we so dearly love.

But if someone in the world, if a minister of the gospel, if a dear friend should come up to you and speak personally to you, these words, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, what would you say?

[2 : 11] Especially as we think of a good hope through grace, the work of God's grace in a sinner's heart.

Would such a question as this bring silence and not a word?

Would it confuse your mind? Would it make you long to run away? Or would you seek God's help and tremblingly seek to speak of that good hope, of that work of grace, of the preciousness of Christ, of yourself as a guilty sinner?

Or do these things mean nothing? Or further still, this is very solemn, that some might be able to use, I was going to say, the language of Zion, and yet, a hypocrite, destitute of the grace of God, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, you, young, middle-aged, and old, this, this, is a personal matter, we all, possess a soul, we all, must come to our, appointed end, it is appointed unto man, once to die, and after that, the judgment, how shall we escape, if we neglect, so great salvation, is it well, with thy soul, art thou born again, a new creature, in Christ Jesus, a true believer, there may be some,

I know not, in this, assembly, this evening, that, that may openly, and very honestly, say that, they are not, a Christian, and that, that they have, no hope, in these things, may, the Lord, in his mercy, by his grace, by the work, of his spirit, convince you, of your sin, and cause you, by his grace, to turn, unto, God, and to cry, for mercy, seek ye, the Lord, while he may be found, call ye, upon him, while he is near, let the wicked, forsake his way, and the unrighteous man, his thoughts, and let him turn, unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, that he will, abundantly pardon, if the righteous, scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly, and sinner appear, not that there is, any limitation, in the glorious, power of salvation, and the precious, and the precious blood, of Jesus Christ, to cleanse, from all sin, but, as the word of God, reveals, what it costs, the dear, away sin, that so great, at salvation, to be left, outside, without, the blood, without,

[7 : 04] Christ, without, faith, without, the work, of God's grace, in the soul, oh, what a solemn state, to live in, and what a solemn state, to die in, to stand, before that great, white throne, without a shelter, in all our sin, and to hear, that most, a solemn word, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, I would speak, very tenderly, I seek, to be faithful, and I, seek, to, declare, the truth, as it is, in Jesus, I now, address, and God knows, how many, that are here, who are, building on the sand, and you may be able, in your way, to speak for yourself, you may say, you've got a good religion, you may, be, quite, a ready talker, isn't there one, in the pilgrim's progress, called, talkative, now my friend, search out, your credentials, how does it stand, what you profess, what you say, how does it measure up, to the standard set, in the word of God, and, those who do fear God, will seek, to, measure, their own experience, to, what is set forth, in the holy scriptures, of, of truth, you see, there's such a thing, as man-made religion, there's such a thing, as a fig tree, that's full of leaves, and no fruit, leaves only, there's such a thing, as tears, that grow with the wheat, there are those, that, are with the wise, and yet, they're foolish, and there's no, oil, in their lamps, there's those, that make a profession, of the name, of Jesus Christ, but they, build on the sand, the great test, will come, at the hour of death, and how, will your religion, stand, how solemn, to come short, at last, how solemn, just to possess, not that we, speak against, the head knowledge, of truth, but head knowledge, won't save the soul, people may, be quite versed, in doctrine, and speak of it, and even debate, about it, but my friend, has the word, of truth, entered with divine, power into our heart,

I say, how many, there are, that, will rest, on, a sandy foundation, a denominational name, being found, under the truth, being found, with God's people, now, all this is, very right, that you, should be, sitting under the truth, that you, should be found, with God's people, but God's people, can't give you, their religion, no more than, the wise, could give the foolish, of their oil, and do not, think, or deceive, yourselves, beloved, that sitting, in our chapel, and under, a denominational name, and even, and I'm going to say it, and I hope I shall not, be misunderstood, in doing so, the name, gospel standard, that won't, save your soul, what we stand for, and what the word, of God sets forth, the things truly, believed among us, yes, but a head knowledge, no, all then, to be made right, thou art permitted, to speak, for thyself, and think, as we have, later on, in this chapter, that solemn word, almost,

Agrippa, said to Paul, almost, thou persuadest me, to be a Christian, the man was honest, he did not acknowledge himself, to be a Christian, but he was so, moved, by the testimony, of Paul, that he exclaimed, in such a way, as he did, that, oh may God help me, to speak tonight, it seems so solemn, when we're dealing, with souls, again, I say friend, almost thou, persuadest me, to be, a Christian, to, how solemn, to live that life, and yet, to be destitute, of that, work of, God's grace, in the soul, almost, a Christian, true, the man, was honest, and, just a little, side turn here, but,

I've named before, you remember, and you children, will know all about, Daniel in the den of lions, won't you, you know the king, that went to the den of lions, and what did he say, Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou service, continually, able to deliver thee, from the lions, and, now, did you notice, what he said, he said, thy God, he couldn't say, my God, he couldn't say, our God, all he could say, is thy God, what did Daniel say, my God, hath, my God, hath, sent his angel, and shut, the lions, mouths, thou art, permitted, to, speak, for thyself, oh, then, I stress, the solemnity, of this matter, of, possessing, a man-made, religion,

I was just going to say, the, thought passed, out of my mind, but has returned, again, the danger, I said, that, Agrippa, was moved, very deeply, by Paul, by the word, that he spoke, you too, and myself, may be most, deeply moved, may be dreadfully alarmed, sometimes, as we hear, the truth preached, may even be, moved with emotion, and receive it, with joy, but, is there a root, is the beginning, right, you see, Jesus Christ, speaks of those, that, heard the word, and, with joy, received it, but it was like, to that seed, that was sown, into stony ground, that is, where, there was just, a little depth of earth, an underlying rock, not just a field, with a few stones in it, but, underlying rock, where there was, no depth of soil, no penetration, no root, a premature growth, and a springing up, and all came, to nothing, oh friend, these things, search, and it's a good thing, if they do, now, if your religion, is right, if your soul, is healthy, if you are rightly, exercised, in these things, though, you may shrink, from close examination, you'll pray for it, you'll desire it, you'll seek it,

[15 : 53] I say, the hypocrite, will try to hide, that those who, have, a false hope, will, run away, or be unmoved, even untouched, the heart, of man, untouched, by grace, is so hard, and indifferent, and, and, unconcerned, so then, thou art, permitted, to speak, for thyself, but now, as I may be helped, and I do need this help, I desire to, set this forth a little, in the experience, of, a dear child of God, and, thou art, permitted, to speak, for thyself, and, tracing a little, here and there, of, the testimony, of the apostle, now, I think you'll, immediately say, some of you, and I would unite, with you, in this, that I've, not had, the sudden conversion, as,

Saul of Tarsus had, or as the Philippian, jailer had, I cannot look back, I do not know, when, or where, the Lord began, in my heart, from a child, I've known the holy scriptures, from a child, I was brought up, to go to God's house, from a child, I never rebelled, against going to God's house, I was always willing, to go to God's house, I always, had a natural love, to go to God's house, and to some of us, the devil attacks us, it's all your upbringing, it's all natural love, and so we get, very, very tried, on this point, but my dear friend, whilst, we cannot, and no one, can speak, of the, remembrance, of their, natural birth, but we know this, that we were born, we are alive, so, God's dear children, though some, and many, cannot speak, clearly, as some, on that moment, when God began that work, but can say, born I am, and that, of God, and how, that the apostle, here, spake, of his manner, of life, from his youth, we have, here, children, we have, young people, and our heart, that yearns, over your soul, and your, manner, of life, from your youth, we see you, in God's house, we thank God, for that, but, what we wait for, watch for, and look for, my dear, children, and young people, is to, see the, evidence, of God's, work, in, your, heart, the fear, of the Lord, and that, work, of his, grace, now,

I do not know, how it is with you, whether there are, any here, that, are just waiting, till they, become of age, and, say, well, when I'm old enough, I'll get away, from all this, I, I'm going my own way, I'm not going to have, these narrow things, as you, speak of them, but, I pray God, that, the Lord will preserve you, and keep you, and, work in your heart, and I'm going to ask you, now, I would speak very carefully here, the very words of the text, thou, my young friend, if we were just alone, if we were just talking, and talking in love, and very kindly to you, and said, thou art, you are permitted, to speak for yourself, would you be able, to say anything, about these things, now, you may say, now, how could I say anything, about these things, well, what I was going to ask you, is this, what about, that little word, but it's a dreadful word,

S, I, N, you know what that is, don't you, now, my young friend, and of course, I speak to the older ones too, but I speak to the young first, what really, does that mean to you, now, you would say, I think you would, oh yes, I know that, I'm a sinner, I know that, I have done, that which is wrong, and sinful, and no doubt about it, yes, but I'm going to ask you, speak for yourself, can you say anything else, about that, does it give you concern, you might say, yes it does, but then, wait a minute, we've got to be very careful, about this, haven't we, you see, there were those in the Bible, that were concerned, with a natural, but, and I speak soberly, they're in hell, they weren't saved, you see,

King Pharaoh said, I have sinned, Achan said, I have sinned, King Saul said, I have sinned, Judas Iscariot said, I have sinned, so, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, I ask you then, can you go any further, or is it just, that, yes, you say, you're a sinner, you acknowledge, you're a sinner, and that's as far, as you go, or is there another step, and I think of my own, little experience, where, and again, I cannot tell exactly when, but I know it was in my, school days, when, I was brought into a, deeper concern, about my sin, and to know that, God was holy, and God was just, and that without, Jesus, and without his blood,

[22 : 26] I must go to hell, and this knowledge, of my sin, led me, to seek mercy, now this is the clear distinction, between what I say, as a natural conviction, of sin, but where, there is a, a verbal acknowledgement, of sin, but there's no turning, to God, it's like, Orpah, that she went back, to Moab, which are you, are you, Orpah, or are you, Ruth, are you, a, a, cleaving, to God's people, do you, love to be with them, and pray, that their God, will be your God, but in just a moment, we mustn't go, too fast, most of you, I say then, in this matter, of conviction, of sin, what did he do, for me, what has he done, for you, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, it led me to, you see, when I was a little boy, that I was taught, to say a prayer,

I tried to pray that, in our prayer, tonight, gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child, pity my simplicity, and suffer me, to come to thee, fain I would, to thee be brought, gracious God, forbid it not, in the kingdom, of thy grace, give a little child, a place, that didn't mean, anything to me, I said the words, but when, I was shown, and felt my sin, and the burden of it, that I was lost, that I needed saving, that I couldn't look, to father and mother, to save me, I couldn't look, to my pastor, to save me, I couldn't rest, upon going to chapel, that that would save me, and as much, as I loved my Sunday school, and my teachers, that couldn't save me, not in and of itself, and so, I started, to try and pray,

I asked God, to have mercy on me, I asked God, to forgive my sin, now I used to go, to chapel, as a little boy, but I used to, long for the amen, perhaps sometimes, quietly, try and see, if I could see, what the time was, or count the people, in the gallery, but you see, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, a change came, I started, to listen, now there was much, I couldn't understand, but there was here, and there something, that I did understand, and something, that showed me, more and more deeply, what a sinner, I was, and yet, not only showed me, my sin, but showed me, that there's a saviour, showed me, that there's Jesus Christ, that receives sinners, showed me, that he would not, cast out those, that come to him, and in those days, when I was so very young, I, in my day school, we used to sing a hymn, and I believe,

God put it in my heart, as a prayer, then, oh my God, prepare my soul, for that great day, oh wash me, in thy precious blood, and take my sins away, now my dear young friend, what's this, you've got one at home, what does it mean to you, do you read it, or is it only read on Sundays, only read when you come to chapel, if the walls of your bedroom, could speak, would they tell me, and your dear pastor, that yes, we see you reading, before you go to sleep, just a verse or two, would those walls tell me, that we see your eyes closed, and you try and pray, that God will forgive your sin, or do we see, that the Bible's a closed book, you know, I read somewhere, where, a little, a young child, said to mother, oh what's that big book up there, it was a Bible, you see like this, a lot of dust on it, and the mother, said oh it's God's book, and so forth, and the child said something to this, don't you think we better send it back, because you don't use it, do you, what about our older friends, is it a closed book through the week, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, and now, as you come to God's house, and you sit under the word, and you hear your dear pastor, and other ministers preach, has there been something for you, in all the sermons you've heard, young and old, is there something that you say,

Lord I believe, I heard thy voice speaking to me there, I believe that word was for my soul, I believe there, I was brought under that conviction of sin, now, when I speak of conviction of sin, God is a sovereign, in all things, some are literally, as it were, shaken over hell, some dread to go to sleep at night, others, led clearly into that conviction, but more gently, but the proof of it will be this way, in this, which way does it lead you, if it leads you away from God, it's natural conviction, if it leads you to God, it is the work of his spirit, and when I say, look, lead you to God like this, you children and young people, will know about the prodigal son, he ran away, he went right away, from the father's house, didn't he, and wasted his substance, with riotous living, but when he began to be in one, he found that this world, didn't satisfy him, have you started to find that, there are things that you rightly enjoy, that God has given, but it doesn't bring peace, it doesn't bring pardon, and he began to be in want, and he came to himself, and then when he came to himself, he went to his father, you see, it led him to the father, it led him, and saying, that he'd sinned, and wasn't worthy of the father's love, can there be mercy, can there be hope, for such a one as this, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, yes, blessed be God, and while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran, fell on his neck, and had compassion, and kissed him, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, and so Paul here says, that his manner of love, and you see, he was saturated with religion, and yet he hated the name of Jesus Christ, you see, the danger of having a religion, destitute of the Holy Spirit of God, but how did this change come about, when he speaks here, of those things that he did, and perhaps as some here may, look back with, remember how they used to scorn those old men, that prayed at the prayer meeting, scorn the ministers of the gospel, oh yes, but oh amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me,

[30 : 12] I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see, there he was on the way, there he was on the way, to put these people to prison, to put them to death, anybody that professed, loving Jesus Christ, faith in Jesus Christ, all the apostles were so angry, and that is of course, before he was called to be an apostle, Saul of Tarsus, but as we read, he said, I saw in the way, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, beloved hearer, has there been a revelation to yourself, now I'm not saying, such a revelation as the apostle had, that you literally saw such a light, or that you heard such a voice, though there is a voice at times that speaks, but has there been something that stopped you, made a change in your life, and as this dear apostle here, he said, I saw in the way, a light from heaven, now this light, it was revealed, it shone from heaven, it shone into his heart, it showed him what a sinner he was, it showed him he was lost, he showed him what a persecutor he was, and yet this light that was revealed, was a light, as one has said, is received into the soul, and this light,

God who commanded the light, to shine out of darkness, to shine in our hearts, to give the light, of the knowledge, of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, oh friend, I say, it's a revealed light, it's a received light, and this light shines in, and it shows me what a sinner I am, but it blessed be God, not only does it show you, your lost state, your sinnership, your ruin, and the holiness and justice of God, but it leads to the cross, it leads to Calvary, it leads to the dear son of God, it leads to this dear precious Christ, it leads to the fountain, open for sin, and for uncleanness, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, beloved friend, have you been led there, have you been led as a poor, guilty sinner, to the foot of the cross, to plead for that mercy, to seek for that pardon, to cry, hear gracious God a sinner's cry, for I have nowhere else, to fly, my hope, my only hopes in thee, oh God be merciful to me, a line I came across the other day, just comes back to my mind, oh I believe I can come in here,

I believe some of you can, deeply affecting, it is to see, my Jesus bathed in blood, to view in him, the crimson path, that leads my soul to God, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, did I hear you say it, no I'm not putting words in your mouth, God forbid, but did I hear some of you say, nothing in my hand I bring, but simply to thy cross I cling, did I hear you say, just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, oh Lamb of God I come, just as I am, without one plea, but perhaps sometimes we have to put it, in the hope thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me, come to thee, oh Lamb of God I come, I come Lord Jesus, I'm just, and I've said recently, and it's been my experience, as I look at the gospel,

I read of a man full of leprosy, I read of a woman that had an issue of blood, I read of a blind beggar, I read of those that were possessed with unclean spirits, I read of those that were palsied and paralysed, and I read of those that were deaf, and so forth, Lord, I'm not just one of those, I'm all of those, I'm all of those, I need thee dear Saviour, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, and oh friend, is it your testimony tonight, that yes, this dear Jesus, oh he's so precious to my soul, he is so wonderful, he's so needful, that oh that I should ever be called to his dear feet, that ever I should have a hope in his mercy, that ever he should speak to me, that ever that love from heaven should flow into such a guilty heart as mine, Lord I cannot, it beyond my understanding, but oh for grace to love thee, on such love my soul still ponder, love so great, so rich, so free, say whilst lost in holy wonder, why oh God, such love for me, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, and then was that the time, when the Lord did come, and bless your soul, with a sweet hope in his mercy, and you had a handful of purpose, a word from heaven, a crumb from the master's table, it's in your hand, it's in your heart, the devil's tempts you, the devil says, it's not yours, the devil will snatch it out of you, he can't, and you won't let him, you can't let him, you can't let anybody take it out of your heart, because Jesus has put it there, and it stands forever, it will be tried, it may be sometimes covered over, you may feel, oh you're in the dark, but as I've often used the illustration, if I stood here now tonight, at midnight, there was no moon, no light, and here's my text, tonight, before you in this Bible, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, and I stood here, now, and the Bible was open,

I couldn't see it, I couldn't see it, because it's dark, no one would say, it's gone, it's not there, it's only because it's dark, that you can't see it, it's there, all the time, did Jesus once upon me shine, then Jesus is forever mine, thou art permitted to speak for thyself, and my friend, here is a bow at adventure, is it time, that you should be coming, to speak for yourself, before the church, to give glory to God, to tell them what a dreadful sinner you are, vile sinner you are, and what he's done for you, how that, yes, in all your fears and trembling, he's led you to pray, to cry for mercy, and put in your soul, a word, a sweet hope, and a love to the Saviour, a desire to word his name, oh come all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he's done for myself, oh, there's so much that's holding you back, isn't there, you're so afraid, you're so afraid, ah, is my case right, is it the right time, oh the Lord, confirm your soul, and then you may say,

[37 : 03] I'm so afraid, I shall make a shipwreck, I'm so afraid, that I shall fall, I shall bring dishonor, my friend, may you ever be right, to the last breath of your life, afraid of that, it's a good place to be in, to pray Lord, keep me from falling, you may say, but oh, there's another thing, that holds me back, and that is that word, in the epistles, he that drinketh unworthily, oh, I'm so afraid of that word, but wait a minute, have you got a right understanding, of that word, unworthily, it doesn't say unworthy, no sinner is worthy, of the blood of Christ, in and of themselves, worthy is the land, but that unworthily, means, one that's professed, faith in Christ, coming to the table, the Lord, and living openly, in sin, and counting, the blood of Christ, as nothing, I say, that is unworthily, but unworthy, why, I love that record, of the dear, I think it must be, in Scotland, where the dear woman, godly woman, she'd taken the bread, but passed the cup, back to the elder, the minister, knowing the case, very well, marked that, took the cup, out of the hands, of the elder, and put it in the hand, of the woman, and said, woman, it's for sinners, and the table, my friend, speaks of the death, of Christ, the shedding of his, body of Christ, and it's for sinners, vile sinners, sinners that, yes, love him, come to him, seek salvation in him, plead his mercy, hang on him, to him, to them, he's everything, so then, oh, that the Lord may, cause the tongue, of the dumb, to sing, yes, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, and, oh, then, in speaking of, what the Lord has done, for your soul, that, the church will, break forth, in that, sweet language, wherefore, come thou, thou, blessed the Lord, wherefore, standest thou, without, but now, the time is gone, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, and walk now, oh, isn't Christ, more precious, don't we have much, to confess, our sinfulness, our backslidings, our hard heart, our idolatry, our pride, our wrong spirit, but he is faithful, and isn't there this, that counting, all things but done, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, isn't there this, a reaching before, those things which are before,

I press toward the mark, of the prize, of the high calling of God, which is in Christ, Jesus our Lord, isn't there this, my friend, where the whole realm, of nature, mind, that were an offering, far too small, love, so amazing, so divine, demands, my life, my soul, and my all, thou art permitted, to speak, for thyself, that Christ, may be magnified, in my body, everything that I have, that God has given me, health and strength, everything that I possess, though stained with sin, might be used, as the sacrifice, on the altar, for his honor, and for his glory, present your bodies, a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable, unto God, which is your, reasonable service, that, as the apostle said, in the epistle, or to the, Philippians, that Christ, may be magnified, not that we can make him, greater than he is, but that all glory, might be unto him, in our very life, in our conversation, in our walk, in our witness, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, because, beloved friend, is not only the word, it's the walk, and this is the vital part, the walk, as we, witness, who we are, and, at whom we serve, that there was, in Europe somewhere, years ago, a valley of roses, and anybody that passed, through that valley, and was found in a, some distance away, they would say, oh, you've been in, the valley of roses, we know it, oh friend, that the world here, in this dark and evil day, that God's dear children, may be with Jesus, and that they may take knowledge, of us, that we have, been, with Jesus, thou art permitted, to speak for thyself, and what about it, friend, well, there it is, to know him more, to love him better, to serve him, to be more like him, oh, that my soul, could love and praise him more, his beauties, traits, his majesty adore, live near his heart, upon his bosom lean, obey his voice, and all his will esteem, to be surrendered, to the crucified, only reserved for Christ, the dying, surrendered to the crucified, and then, to seek, that grace, to endure to the end, and at last, in peace, let me resign my breath, and thy salvation, see, my sins deserve eternal death, but Jesus died for me, one final thought, and I mustn't keep you, almost, and altogether, which one, almost, thou persuadest me, to be a Christian, altogether, says Paul, such, as I am, which, part of that, line do you stand on, which side, remember, the division of the cross, the two that were crucified, with Jesus, one, perishing in his sin, the other,

Lord, remember me, received by Jesus, oh, the preaching of the cross, is unto them, which perish, is foolishness, but unto us, which are saved, it is the power of God, thou art permitted, to speak, for thyself, amen, may the Lord help us now, in closing, this service, by singing hymn number, 191, O, why, did Jesus, show to me, the beauties, of his face, why, to my soul, did he convey, the blessings, of his grace, hymn 191, and the h Hollens, inelda,