

WHAT IS A TESTIMONY?
Doctrine and Covenants 76:79
By Raymond White

D&C 76:79 These [Terrestrial] are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.

We all have testimonies, or so we say. Those of you who claim to “have a testimony,” are you quit sure you even know what a testimony is?

Strictly speaking, a testimony is not what you believe but what you say about what you believe. Suppose you see a violent crime committed, and the police ask you “what did you see?” And you say, “I’m sorry, I don’t want to get involved.” Clearly, what you know and what you say are two different things. We too often think that because we know something, or believe, or have had an experience, that we have a testimony. That is not true. Observing a crime or having a conversion experience does not give you a testimony, it merely makes you a “witness.” You know what you know; that is, you witnessed something.

Now, if, instead of saying “I don’t want to get involved,” you say “I saw a crime, that man did it, put me on the stand, I will testify.” Then you are not only a witness but you are a testifier, and your words are your testimony, not your belief.

Here’s the point: There is no such thing as a silent testimony. You know what you know — that’s nice. But if you will not speak of it, if you keep silent, then your knowledge is not a testimony at all, it is merely a witness and that alone will not save you: **James 2:19** *...the devils also believe, and tremble.*

Here is a short list of things that should be in your “testimony”; that is, things that you should be willing to speak freely about.

2 Nephi 27:12 testify to the truth of the book.
Jacob 2:6 testify of the wickedness of your heart.
1 Nephi 22:30 testify that a man must be obedient.
Alma 5:44 testify of things which are to come
D&C 114:1 testify of my name. [Most important]

And finally, to repeat the opening verse of this writing,

D&C 76:79 These [Terrestrial] are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.

The point of this final verse is that people who know Jesus, and are even devoted to him, but will not open their mouths to speak of him, do not have a “testimony” (in the sense that a testimony is what you say and not what you believe) of Jesus, and they will therefore be quite happy in the Terrestrial Kingdom. So says the text.

The message is quite simple. Try a little harder to give voice to what you believe about Jesus Christ. To believe is a good thing. But to articulate that belief when it actually matters is a better thing, the “valiant” thing.