

The Sin of Silence

by Denis Lyle

The sin of silence is a serious offense that can lead to spiritual death, but God's intervention can bring about a miracle of salvation and a new life in Christ.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:15, Isaiah 10:5, John 3:16, Romans 8:32, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Timothy 6:17, James 4:17, 1 John 3:4

Topics: "Evangelism", "Silent Omission"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches about 'The Sin of Silence' using the story of the four lepers in 2 Kings 7:3-16 as an illustration. He emphasizes the importance of not remaining silent about our faith in Christ, even in the face of ridicule or indifference from others. Lyle highlights the need to speak up and share the Gospel, pointing out that silence can be a sin of omission. The sermon challenges listeners to be like the lepers who refused to stay silent and instead shared the good news, leading to the salvation of many in the city.

Transcript

Reading: 2 Kings 7:3-16 THE SIN OF SILENCE A woman in a mid-Western town in the USA some years ago took an unusual method of testifying to her faith in Christ. Her friends for the most part were lukewarm and indifferent. Nominal Christians one might call them. So one day when she knew they would be passing by, she stood before a wooden Indian in front of a store and spoke to that wooden Indian about Christ. When her friends ridiculed her for creating such a scene, she gave this defence, "I would rather be a real Christian and share Christ with a wooden Indian, than be a wooden Christian who never shared Christ with anyone."

At the close of a service, a critic approached DL Moody, the great evangelist, and said, "Mr. Moody, during your address this evening I counted eighteen mistakes in your English". Looking at his critic, Mr. Moody said, " Young man, I am using to the glory of God all the grammar that I know. Are you doing the same" A study of the Bible reveals that we can be guilty of the sins of omission as well as the sins of commission. "Sin", says the Bible "is the transgression of the law". (1 Jn 3:4) But the Bible also says, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not to him it is sin". (James 4:17) Now our examination of this OT miracle leads us into a study of one of the sins of omission.

The Sin of Silence! The story before us is a fascinating one, and challenging too in its implications for us. The historical situation was simple. Samaria was under siege, surrounded by the invading hosts of the Syrian armies. (6:24-25) The city was in desperate plight. Cannibalism was rife as the people were

starving. (6:29) These four lepers had been trapped between the enemy and the walls of the city. Their conditions was both helpless and hopeless. They were banned from the city (Lev 13:46) and to enter the camp of the Syrians meant instant death.

Then suddenly all was changed because God intervened (7:6) And what God did then, and what God did in the coming of Christ, and what God is still willing and able to do today, is to intervene in power. Ill: Was it not Dr. Stanley Jones who said, " The early Christians did not spend their time moaning about what the world was coming to, but rejoiced in what had come to the world". (1) THE GOD THEY ABANDONED My, God was dealing in judgment with Samaria. (Is 10:5) Why Because they had turned away from Jehovah and were worshipping false gods. (3:3 1 Kings 12:28) And God according to His Word had visited them with severe judgment.

God had been Abandoned. Think of the: (a) MISERY THAT THIS BROUGHT: For there was not only famine within the city, but without as well. Here were four lepers at the city wall (4:3) who felt the pinch of famine as keenly as those who were within. Indeed they felt it more keenly for in their case the pangs of hunger had come to aggravate the pains of disease. (Deut 28:15 52-53) It was a desperate situation in which they found themselves. They had no doubt been sleeping outside the city walls, and had awakened one morning to find themselves trapped and surrounded by the Syrian hordes.

The tactics of the enemy were simple enough: they would starve the city into submission. My, here were four lepers at wit's end corner not knowing which way to turn. (7:3-4) Are they not typical of people today Are we not living in similar days when an increasing sense of hopelessness and helplessness is gripping the minds of all thinking people Evil and violence and wickedness are rampant right on our door step. And there seems to be no answer, no way out. Ill: Listen to the words of an USA journalist: "It seems to me that living is futile, and death the final indignity".

Listen to the words of a mother, words spoken to her minister out of the agony of her grief when the pastor called to comfort her after her only son had died, she cried, "He's well out of this world". Listen to another writer, "Is this all that life amounts to To stumble almost by mistake into a universe which clearly was not designed for life, and which to all appearance is either totally indifferent or definitely hostile to it To stay, clinging to a fragment, a grain of sand until we are frozen off To strut our tiny hours on our tiny stage, with the knowledge that all our aspirations are doomed to final frustration, and that all our achievements must perish with our race, and we must leave this universe as though we had never been" My, think of the number of teenagers who are committing suicide.

Hundreds every year are putting an end to their lives because to them life has ceased to be worth living. Why Because they're living their life without God. Is this you Have you abandoned God Have you now no time or thought for the things of God Is this why your life is purposeless: aimless: empty Here were a people who abandoned God. (a) (b) MYSTERY THAT THIS WROUGHT: They had abandoned God, but God had not abandoned them, rather He works a miracle, a mystery on their behalf.

You see in their desperation these lepers rose up and went into the camp of the Syrians and we read, " Behold there was no man there for the Lord... "(7:5-6) The Lord intervened! We have heard of the Invisible Man these lepers thought they were facing an Invisible Army. My, God had stepped into the situation (7:6) The Heavenly Horsemen rode again (6:17) And the Syrians had fled in utter panic. (7:7) These men just could not believe their eyes. They were amazed at what God had done.

The forces that had encircled and trapped them had been dispersed and defeated. God had intervened. My, is this not what the message of the Gospel is all about It speaks of the intervention of God in human affairs. God has acted in Christ, and through that intervention and through what God has done and still can and will do in the lives of men and women, God is at work today as well as yesterday. So there is a miracle here, a mystery there, but what of that Is not the Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe, able to do what man cannot do, and cannot understand My, our confidence this... is in a God who can and does intervene universally: nationally: domestically, and personally!

Like these lepers are you too at wit's end corner Do you not know which way to turn Does there seem to be no way out My, God can intervene He can reverse your situation: He is a God of love and love is never content to stand idly by and see some need unmet. (1) (2) THE GAIN THEY ACQUIRED Can you picture this scene Acting at once upon their resolve (7:4) they move forward to the camp of the Syrians, they reached the outside of the camp, but they were not challenged, they entered the camp itself but nowhere could they see a single human form and there before them was an abundance of food and the Syrians themselves had vanished.

Without delay the lame proceeded to take the prey. Think for a moment of: (a) THEIR SUDDEN ENRICHMENT: Those who moments before had nothing at all, now had everything they wanted and needed. What did they need Was it food It was there in abundance. Was it drink It was there and they could take their fill and quench their thirst. Was it dress They could take off their rags and the pick of the camp was theirs for the taking. Was it transport Horses and asses were there. Was it wealth They could fill their pockets and take sackfuls of gold and silver besides.

They had been paupers, but now they were as rich as princes. So many people seem to think that when God intervenes in our lives it is to take from us when the truth of the matter is it is to give to us (Jn 3:16) Do you recall Paul's words which underline the abundance of the Christian life He says, "Blessed be the God and Father... in Christ." (Eph 1:3) III: A rich landowner named Carl often rode around his vast estate so he could congratulate himself on his great wealth. One day while riding around his estate on his favourite horse, he saw Hans an old tenant farmer, who was sitting under a tree when Carl rode by.

Hans said, "I was just thanking God for my food". Carl protested, "If that is all I had to eat, I wouldn't feel like giving thanks". Hans replied, "God has given me everything I need, and I am thankful for it." Then the old farmer added, "Its strange that you should come by today, for I had a dream last night. In my dream I voice said, "The richest man in the valley will die tonight". I don't what it means but I thought I ought to tell you." Carl could not forget Hans's words, "The richest man in the valley will die tonight".

He was obviously the richest man in the valley. So he invited his doctor to his house that evening. Carl told the doctor what Hans said. After a thorough examination, the doctor told him, "Carl you are as strong and healthy as your horse. There is no way you are going to die tonight". Nevertheless for assurance the doctor stayed with Carl and they played cards all night. At about nine o'clock the next morning, a messenger arrived at Carl's door. "What is it" Carl demanded. The messenger explained, "Its about old Hans.

He died last night in his sleep." My, do you realise how rich you are The richest people in the world are not those who amass worldly fortunes or those who develop lucrative portfolios. The richest people in the world are God's people. We are suddenly no longer paupers but in Christ we are multi-millionaires. Christian, what is your need this... Is it pardon Is it power you need Is it wisdom Is it guidance Is it hope

you need (Rom 8:32) Well, " Out of His infinite riches in Jesus He giveth...

"(a) But the sad thing was that the sudden enrichment of the lepers led on to: (b) **THEIR SELFISH ENJOYMENT**: For in (7:8) we find these men having a wonderful time, eating and drinking their fill. Why they wanted they took and hid much more besides. If anyone had come up to them they would have said that they were having a wonderful time and that it was tremendous what God had done for them. All that would have been true. And all that is equally true of the Christian and is meant to be that way.

The Bible speaks of a God who "giveth us richly all things to enjoy". (1 Tim 6:17) The problem is that we are not to enjoy these things **SELFISHLESSLY** but **SACRIFICALLY** with others! Ill: Someone has defined evangelism as "one satisfied beggar telling other hungry beggars where to find bread". My, we are found to find others: we are told to tell others: we are won to win others: we are saved to save others. Yet so often we are guilty of selfish enjoyment. We have our holy huddles and our bless-me clubs, we have our exclusive fellowship suppers while the world goes to hell.

We loot God's blessings for ourselves alone. My... its time we in the churches woke up to our obligations and our indebtedness to the "starving", multitudes around us. Selfish Enjoyment! Does that describe this church, this preacher, we believers Or have we a concern to share the Gospel with others 1.2 (3) **THE GOOD THEY ACCOMPLISHED** In the Syrian Camp they ate and drank until they were satisfied, then they thought of the starving multitudes and their conscience smote them. Here they were having a wonderful time, but yonder in the city men and women were perishing with hunger.

Look at (7:9) Do you see what happened (1) The four lepers told one porter: (2)The one porter told the other porters: (3) Those porters told the King: (4) The King told the city and the people were saved. Paul says, "As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men... " (Gal 6:10) And the greatest good we can do to men is to tell them about the deliverance that is found in Christ. (3) How did they accomplish this good Well, (a) **THEY REFUSED TO BE SILENT**: Look at (7:9) They said, "We are not doing right".

They were leaving thousands in the doomed city, leaving them to die in their misery, while all the time they were enjoying themselves. "We do not well... and we hold our peace,... now therefore come that we may go and tell". (7:9) The sin of silence was their sin. Is it ours too When did you last speak to someone about Christ When did you last invite anyone to come and hear the gospel We pray for souls to be saved in this church, but are there souls here to be saved Is there not someone who you could invite this... to hear the Gospel (a) Ill: R.A.Torrey went into a restaurant one day with some Christian friends.

Immediately, the Lord spoke to him and said, "Speak to the waiter about Christ". Torrey put it off, "Lord this is not the time or the place". They carried with on their meal but the conviction got stronger and Torrey resolved that the next time the waiter came to his table he would speak to him about the Saviour. But he never came back. When they were leaving the restaurant that evening Torrey said to the manager, "I would like speak to the man who served us". The manager said, "Sir, I'm afraid that's impossible for a short while ago he committed suicide".

R.A.Torrey said that he would carry that incident with him to his day of accountability at the Judgment Seat of Christ. What about us My, this day is a day of good tidings, are we holding our peace (b) **THEY RESOLVED TO BE SERVANTS**: For they said, "Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household". (7:9) The lepers became witnesses and these "witnesses", told a very simple sequence of facts: that bread was available and where to get it. My, are we serving the **LORD RESPONSIBLY** Do we realise that if we "hold our peace", our silence will result in inevitable loss at the Judgment Seat My, are

we serving the LORD VOCALLY Why do we find it so hard to tell of all that our dearest Friend has done for us Are we serving the LORD URGENTLY The lepers said, "If we tarry...

"The time is short, the lost are dying, the opportunity is passing the Lord is coming and God's Word to us is "Go and tell". III: The story is told of a heathen king who was mortally wounded in combat. As he lay dying on the battlefield he signaled to his servant to come to his side. Looking into the face of that soldier he said, "Go tell the dead I'm coming". Without a moments hesitation that faithful servant drew his sword and plunged it into his own heart to "go and tell the dead that his master was coming."

The Lord Jesus is King. He came to die on a cross for our redemption. Soon He's coming back to judge and reign and the Christian is to go and tell the world that today there is a Living Saviour, but tomorrow He's coming back to Judge. Are you prepared to draw the sword of death to self/ease/pride/apathy/ in order that you may go and tell men "dead in", that Christ lives and saves. " Mine are the hands... "

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