

WITNESSING FOR CHRIST

"But ye shall receive power upon the coming of the Holy Spirit upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

These were almost the last recorded words which were spoken by our Lord to His disciples on the Mount of Olives just before He ascended from the earth. In them, as in the case of His other utterances, Christ went to the very heart of the matter with which He was dealing.

I. The Occupation.

Christ's last word to His followers concerning the character of the service in which He wanted them to engage was that "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." He sent them forth with the responsibility resting upon them of bearing witness to His disputed reality and power. Knowing that down through the centuries there would be some in every generation who would dispute His reality and power, Christ sent forth His followers to be living proofs of His grace and power.

In commissioning believers to a simple but very important occupation or office Christ said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." "Ye shall be witnesses," and not advocates. Our advocacy at its very best would be weak and inadequate, but our witnessing to a personal experience of His saving, sanctifying and sustaining power will be unanswerable. It is to this occupation of witnessing for Christ that every child of God is called. You are called to be a witness for Christ if you have been saved. You have not been called to leave your present vocation, if it is an honorable one, in order to be a witness for Christ. You are rightfully expected to "abide in your calling but take the Lord into partnership."

What is a witness? A witness is a person who has seen something, who has heard something, who has experienced something, who knows something and who is willing to tell what he knows. A witness is one who tells what he himself has seen, has heard or has experienced.

A witness for Christ is a person who has had a very definite and personal experience with Him in salvation, and then tells another what he knows about the Saviour in the hope that he will receive Him and come to know Him as his Saviour too.

Those early Christians or witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem, who introduced so many people to Christ, were just ordinary, everyday men and women, who knew Christ as their Saviour and loved Him because He had saved them. After they had undergone a spiritual purging, they had walked with the Lord, talked with Him and lived in close fellowship with Him. Those Spirit-possessed and Spirit-led men and women had been cleansed of their selfish ambition for place and preferment, as well as cleansed of their resentments, self-righteous pride and crippling fears. Not self, but Another was the theme of their witnessing. Their testimony was about what Christ, the most unique person in the annals of history, had done for them.

The high task and glorious service to which our Lord and Master calls us is that of being witnesses for Him. Remember that witnessing is not

necessarily preaching. Preaching is the exposition and application of God's Word, whereas witnessing has to do with what we ourselves have experienced and proved. The chief reason for the remarkable success in propagating the gospel and in increasing the number of Christians in the first century was the fact that every Christian witnessed to the unsaved and sought to win them to personal faith in Christ.

It was my privilege to stand in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral in London and to look at the monuments erected to many of the great men who helped to make the history of England. Among them I observed a small slab erected to the memory of the architect of the Cathedral, Sir Christopher Wren. It is just plain slab, quite unworthy in itself of the master-architect, but its inscription says, "If you wish to see his memorial, look round about you." That is all. That majestic cathedral is his best memorial, and does not need any words to help proclaim his skill. Likewise, our Lord Jesus sends every Christian out into the world to be His lasting memorial before men, a proof of His indisputable reality to those who call His being, salvation and power into question.

II. The Obligation.

As certainly as this assignment was given to the apostles, it has also been given by the Lord Jesus Christ to every believer in Him on the face of this earth today. Christ commands every Christian to be a witness for Him. This command and obligation to witness is to every Christian without a single exception. Witnessing for Christ is the substance of active Christianity. It is not arguing. It is not denouncing. It is simply the telling of a story, the hearing-witness to an experience. One reason why God gave us the power of speech was that we might bear witness for Christ. Any religion which does not have in it the urge to express itself does not come from God.

It is the will of our Lord that every saved person shall be a witness for Him. He does not want a single drone in His family, who does not bear witness to the saving power of Christ.

If any man has a good thing to sell, he will let the public know it. Without any hesitation he will proclaim its merits. He will try his best to persuade people that they need it and will never be well, happy or successful unless or until they get it. If you are a child of God, you have the best thing in this world: salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. You have what everybody needs, so you are under an obligation to offer it to them. You owe to all men the communication of the truth by which you are living.

If you should have the remedy for some dread disease, it would be criminal for you to withhold that knowledge from others. What would you think of a physician, if he should discover a sure cure for cancer and then keep that knowledge to himself? If you, as a Christian, have a cure for all the ills of the soul, which is something that every unsaved person needs, it is a terrible sin for you to remain silent about it. The depth of your experience of grace in Christ may be measured accurately by your ability or your inability to remain quiet about it. Vocal and aggressive Communists certainly put professing Christians, who do not witness for Christ, to open shame. If you are a Christian, you are under obligation to bear your personal testimony to sinners about the forgiveness, peace, love, joy and power which Christ has brought into your heart. There is

no escape from the divinely-given obligation to tell lost sinners about Christ where they are, regardless of what they do with Him after your testimony has been borne.

Of all the weaknesses that church members have today, perhaps they are weakest in this realm of witnessing for Christ. The average church member not only never talks to anybody about his personal relationship to Christ and strives to introduce him to the Saviour, but he never even tries to do so. Today there is absolutely no sense of obligation whatever on the part of the average church member with reference to introducing anybody to Christ. If every member were just like those who never tell anybody what the Saviour has done for them and never try to get them to trust Christ, nobody else would ever be saved. This failure, on the part of church members, to talk to others about their need of the Saviour is often due to the fact that they do not have any knowledge about Him to share with others. The unsaved know that such church members do not have much, if any, more than they have, or they would not remain silent about it. Both saved and unsaved people know that those who love Christ will do the things which He has commanded and which will please Him. So, it is clear to every observer that, when a professing Christian and a church member neglects or refuses to witness for Christ as He has commanded and rightfully expects him to do, love for Christ is certainly lacking. Our Lord said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Failure to obey Him is positive proof of a lack of love. Are you witnessing for Christ to those who do not know Him as Saviour? People are saved when church members lovingly witness to them and urge them to receive Christ as their Saviour.

1. An obligation to witness to our relatives.

To the Gadarene, whom Christ had saved and who wanted to accompany the Saviour, our Lord said, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:19). What did the man do in obedience to that command of Christ? Verse twenty tells us, "And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him." Another good example is found in John 1:41-42: "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." It is the first business of every Christian to witness to his relatives. Sometimes people refuse to witness to their kinfolk because they know they do not have any confidence in their so-called Christianity. Some unsaved parents, who are church members, refuse to let others witness to their children.

2. An obligation to witness to neighbors and friends.

3. An obligation to witness to people around the world.

Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Note that the command is not to amuse, to entertain, to feed or to promote a program, but to give the gospel of Christ to those who have not received Him as their Saviour.

III. The Outcome.

1. Multitudes refuse to witness for Christ.

2. Some bear a false witness.

3. Others are true and faithful witnesses.

They bear witness with their lips. Much can be made known only through the speech of the lips. Personal responsibility constantly rests upon those who know and love Christ. Christians have a job to do for Christ.

"A true witness delivereth souls" (Proverbs 14:25). Conversely, an untrue witness fails to deliver souls. He uses his influence in the wrong direction. It is wonderfully encouraging to know that, guided by the Spirit of God and speaking out of the treasury of my own experience, I may speak words which will make an eternal difference to some soul. On the other hand, failure to speak the words which ought to be spoken will also make an eternal difference to some soul.

We are living in an era when sin is articulate, unbelief is vocal, evil advertises and communism is loudly aggressive, and church members are silent about Christ -- what He has done for them and what He means to them.

Every Christian has a glorious opportunity to witness for Christ by his life and with his lips. There is nothing which can withstand the witness of a godly life. The life should shine for Christ and the lips should speak for Him. It is strange how talkative many church members can be about politics, sports, weather, business and social affairs, and yet remain silent about Christ, salvation and spiritual things. People talk freely and frequently about the things they value the highest and love the most. When Christ means anything to a person he will let others know it, and they will be influenced by him.

Two traveling men stopped one Sunday at the same hotel in a certain Southern city, the one a believer, the other an unbeliever. The believer persuaded the unbeliever to go to church with him. A man who loved Christ and witnessed for Him greeted and shook hands with them. At night the unbeliever invited the believer to go with him to the same church again and gave as his reason: "That man who shook hands with me at the door this morning has something I haven't. I want to go back and shake hands with him again."

Are you witnessing for Christ? If you want to be a happy Christian, you will witness for Him. There is no joy on earth equal to that which you experience when you introduce a person to Christ. If you love your relatives and friends, you will witness to them for Christ. Failure to do so proves to them that Christ doesn't mean much to you. If you love Christ, you will have a strong desire to please Him. But, you certainly cannot please Christ by remaining silent about Him. Won't you prove that Christ is your Saviour and that you love Him by witnessing to others for Him?