

WITNESSING

PSALM 126:6

By Mike Burnham

Witnessing seems to be one of the most difficult of Christ's commands to follow. One statistic I read said that only one in every nineteen Christians in Church have ever led a person to Christ. Ninety-five percent of the Christians have never led one soul to Christ. But Jesus said, "*follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*", Mat. 4:18-20. Something is wrong! Maybe it's because Christians are not "*following him*".

Acts 1:8...To bear witness means "*to be or give evidence*"; "*to testify*" by life, actions, or words (written or spoken). The Greek word translated witness is "*martus*", and is where the English word "*martyr*" comes from. When Jesus says; "*ye shall be witnesses unto me*", he is telling his disciples to testify to the world those things they have seen and heard and know, of and from and about Jesus Christ, see 1 John 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 2 Tim. 2:1,2. Jesus gave the Church the command to witness unto him to all the world and also to baptize, to teach, and to govern, and promote the life-style he taught, Mark 16:14-16; Mat. 28:18-20. Witness does not mean "*to save*", only God can save and convict through the Holy Spirit. We never save anyone, our duty, (actually it is a privilege and an honor bestowed upon us) is to "*proclaim*" the gospel, Romans 10:13-15,17. The gospel is the channel by which faith comes to a person, Gal. 3:2,5.

Most of us lack self-confidence and that keeps us from witnessing. If we remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, we can overcome our fear. It is the Holy Spirit who enlightens and convicts, and he uses our witnessing to do so as we rely on him to give us power to witness. We are not responsible for the results, 1 Cor. 3:5-10. We are privileged to be the instruments of God in saving souls. To me, the most joyous occasion on earth is to witness to someone and see that

person come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. The next is seeing them follow the Lord in baptism and join our Church and then see them become active in the Lord's work and grow.

While it is true that we have not seen and heard Jesus personally, we have seen and heard him in the Word of God, and in our lives, and this is what we are to witness or testify to others. We have something to say that is infinitely worth hearing. We have a revelation that man in general is completely in the dark about. He actually changed us. We have a testimony to share with others. **(1)** He took away our guilt and gave us peace. (Psychiatrists know that one of man's main problems is guilt because of sin and that man has to get out from under its pressure to find peace of mind, but they don't know how to relieve the problem. The only way is by the Blood of Jesus Christ. Only by knowing we are forgiven by God can we have peace of mind, Col. 1:19-22; Eph. 1:6,7; John 3:18; Heb. 9:14; Psa. 51:1-4,7. (2). Jesus has given us hope, which the world doesn't have, 1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rom. 5:1-11; Acts 24:15. **(3)** Jesus gave us an ultimate purpose for living: *to serve and glorify God*, even in adversity, which the world doesn't have, 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:22,23; 2 Cor. 4:8,9,14-18; 1 Cor. 15: 57,58; Titus 3:3-8; 2:11-14. **Our beginning wasn't meaningless**, for God had a purpose for us being born, our main purpose in life is to fulfill his purpose, Roman 8:28; 2 Tim. 1:9. **Our end is not meaningless**, for we will not have an end but eternal life, the lost, on the other hand, will have an end, Heb. 9:27. **Our dignity** we get from God for we are of his family, we are children of the king. **(4)** Jesus has given us a joy within that is difficult to explain but that allows us to rejoice in the expectation of our full salvation to come through the faith that is in us, 1 Pet. 1:8,9. **(5)** Jesus gave us a happiness that cannot be threatened because he gave us a love that cannot be threatened, Rom. 8:38,39. To know that God loves us, and that it will never change no matter what, should make anyone happy.

Not only do we have our personal testimony to share with the lost but we have "*Good News*" (the gospel). That good news is that they too can share in the same things we have through Jesus Christ our Lord. The gospel is shown to us by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 20-23. But this is really only part of the good news. We are saved by grace through faith, Eph. 2:8,9. I don't have to straighten out my life and do a lot of other things to be saved. How do we share the good news with the lost?

First, lets look at witnessing with our life and our actions. Paul says we are *letters of Christ*, known and read of all men, written without ink, 2 Cor. 3:2,3. We are living records of the genuineness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. No one who comes into contact with you and sees the change that has come about in your attitude, the way you live, the things you do and don't do, etc, as a result of your acceptance of the gospel, cannot fail to read the writing of the Spirit of the living God upon your heart. We may be the only bible the lost ever read and no one is read more closely then one who calls himself a Christian, and no one knows how a christian should live and act more than a lost person. Peter also tells about witnessing *without words*, 1 Pet. 3:1-6. We see this type of witnessing put into action by Paul and Silas with excellent results in Acts 16:19-34.

In witnessing *with words* we need to express emotion. If we are really concerned about someone and really believe what we are saying, our emotion will impress it upon the person we are talking to. We are to seek our neighbour's conversion because we love them, we desire his or her eternal good, and the expression of love is an emotion. We can see this in Paul, Rom. 9:1-3. He, of course, is exaggerating when he says that he wished to be accursed from Christ, but he is trying to express how deep his love and concern is for Israel to be saved. Keep in mind that "*but for the grace of God, there am I*".

Another thing to remember is that the gospel has power, faith comes through the preaching and living of the gospel, the holy Spirit works to convict a person through the preaching of the gospel, Romans 1:16. We can see that power at work every time a person is saved and by seeing lives changed. Knowing the power of the gospel, we should not be ashamed of it. What is the gospel to us? Is it just a name? Or so many words? So many truths? Or is the gospel a living power, able to save, to heal the emptiness, the broken hearted, to create a new creature, and to give joy unspeakable? 1 Thes. 1:5,6; Isa. 55:10,11.

Knowing that the gospel is foolishness unto the lost, and that it may bring ridicule and contempt, sometimes makes us ashamed to bring the gospel to them, 1Cor. 2:13-14. But we know the gospel is not foolishness and that it is the only way to salvation, John 14:6; Acts 4:12. Therefore, we should not be ashamed. We also know that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, and that we can overcome our fear and shame through Christ who has overcome the world, but overcoming can only be done through faith, 2 Tim. 1:7-10,12,13; Phil. 4:13; 1 John 4:4; 5:4;

Whether witnessing by your life or with words we need to pray for the Holy Spirit's power and his work in the heart of the one we are witnessing to. Prayer shows our faith in and dependence upon God and shows our concern is genuine, Acts 4:23,29-31,33. God at times waits for us to show our faith, dependence, and concern before he acts. James tells us that "*we have not, because we ask not*", James 4:2. He, through the Holy Spirit will give us the boldness we need "*as*" we trust in him. This boldness entails a *stepping out* in faith.

A plan helps us to overcome our lack of self-confidence. A simple plan to learn is what is called "the Roman road to salvation". The first step is to show a person he is a sinner, Rom. 3:10,17,18,23. A lot of people don't know they are sinners or even what sin is. See 1 John 3:4. God is holy and he has standards that man, his creation, are to follow. These standards are given in short form by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), and more fully showing the true spirit of the law in (Matthew 5:17-48). But the fulfillment of these commandments is given in Mat. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:10. A person should be able to see where he has fallen short of God's standard. He or she should be able to admit that they are a sinner. Saving faith is when one sees himself as a hopeless, helpless, hell-deserving sinner and realizes that Jesus is his only hope of escape. It involves *repentance*, turning away from the way of the world to the way of God, Luke 24:46,47; Acts 20:21; 2 Cor. 7:9-11.

The *second* step to explain that like our society, when a person is guilty of breaking the law he must be punished. Because God is holy, he cannot overlook sin, Rom. 1:18, 2:1-6,16. But God must punish sin or he would cease to be a Holy God. He would become less than what he is and would no longer be perfect, and therefore no longer God. The punishment for breaking his law is *death*, Rom. 6:23 (just the first part). Death does not mean annihilation but eternal punishment in hell, Rev. 20:10,14,15, Mat. 25:41,46; Psm. 9:17. It also means *separation*. All good things come from God, James 1:17. God's grace, mercy, and goodness fall upon the just and the unjust alike on this earth, Mat. 5:43-45. Death is separation from God's grace, mercy, and goodness, from hope, love, friends, and happiness, 2 Thes. 1:7-9; Rev. 21:8.

Someone might say; "But I thought God was a God of love, he wouldn't do that which we have just talked about?" Yes, God is a God of love, John 3:16; 1 John 4:8. But there comes a time when a just and holy God cannot treat the obedient and the disobedient alike. A person can spurn God's love and reject his mercy just so long and then judgment must come, Prov. 1:24-31. God showed you his love by sending his Son, 1 John 4:9,10, providing a way to escape his wrath, John 3:36; 5:25,29. When a person rejects God's Son they spurn his love and call him a liar, 1 John 5:9,10. In the physical realm God has provided food, but if you don't eat it you will starve to death. You cannot blame God for that and neither can you blame him because you rejected his food for life eternal, which is his Son, Jesus Christ, the bread of life, John 6:47-51.

The *third* step is to tell them that God has provided man with a way out, (read the rest of Rom. 6:23). God has a gift that he wants to give to you. A gift is free for the taking. If you have to pay for it or work for it, it is not a gift. That gift of God is eternal life and the way to receive that life is through Jesus Christ.

The *fourth* step is to tell them that the reason God is able to give them this gift through Christ is because Christ paid the penalty for breaking the law by taking their place, Rom. 5:8. "*For us*" means on behalf of or in place of us. If you borrowed a million dollars from a bank and a short time later they demanded you to pay it back or they'll come after you, and then a friend goes to the bank and pays the million dollars for you or on your behalf, your account is clear. This is what Jesus did for you. He paid for all your sins when he died on the cross and your account with God is clear. Jesus has satisfied all the claims that God has against you, he paid the price that you owed. This is what "*propitiation*" means, 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Rom. 3:23-25.

The *fifth* step is to tell them that to receive the gift of God they need to call upon Jesus to save them, Rom. 10:9-13. "Whosoever" means exactly that, whosoever. Anyone can put their name in its place. When a parachutist jumps out of an airplane he puts his trust in his parachute to save him. What he is saying is, parachute, my life is in your hands. If I am going to live you'll have to save me. But if you don't save me I'm going to die. This is the same kind of faith that we must put in Christ. I would also add here Rom. 4:20-25. God, raising Jesus from the dead, gave evidence that he accepted Christ's sacrifice in our place, so that all who believe are justified in God's sight.

The *sixth* step is to encourage them to make a public profession of their faith in Church, through baptism.

EXAMPLE OF WITNESSING

John 4:6-15...First of all Jesus initiated the conversation using what was a common interest to both at the time, water. Next, he showed her he was her friend. Jesus is described as having been a friend of publicans and sinners. He was not aloof, but went to the losts homes, sat at their tables, and answered to their needs. Jesus came to "seek" and "to save" the lost (Luke 19:10). Christians tend to forget the "seek" portion and wait for the lost to come to them. We sometimes forget that we are sinners saved by grace and that, as Paul said, "*by the grace of god I am what I am*" (1 Cor. 15:10). Jesus did not teach isolation, nor did he practice it. We are to avoid conforming to the world, becoming a part of it, not avoid the lost. Thirdly, he aroused her interest in verse 10. Seeing that he did not have anything with which to draw the water from the deep well she asked him where he thought he was going to get this *living* water in the desert, living water to

her meant *running* water such as a stream. Was he greater than Jacob? , v-11,12. People are usually full of questions. If you can arouse their interest and get them to ask questions, you have accomplished the hardest part of your witness. Once the lost person has taken the initiative in asking, all pressure goes out of any conversation about Jesus Christ and it can be picked up at a later time without embarrassment. Fourthly, Jesus offered something that was relevant to her at the time, water. To the aging Nicodemus Jesus spoke of *new life*, a new beginning (John 3:3); to the blind man he spoke of *light* (John 9:5,6); to the woman *living water*. Most people are thinking of their own needs. We must offer Jesus to them in ways that relate to those needs, whether it's loneliness, guilt, sorrow, meaninglessness, or whatever it might be. Fifthly, Jesus brought her to a point of decision, verses 25,26. If we don't bring the person to whom we are witnessing to a place where he has the opportunity to choose or reject Jesus, our witness is incomplete. The woman made a decision, verse 29.

John 4:35-38....Here we see another principal in witnessing. In verse 35 Jesus showed them that there were great opportunities for spreading the gospel, the fields were white to harvest. The hills of Samaria were spiritually ripe because of the woman's witnessing, verse 30,39. The disciples were about to start reaping the benefits of Jesus' sowing. The sower (the Son of God) and the reapers who gather fruit unto eternal life may and will rejoice together, verse 36.

Another way of looking at this passage is that sometimes the one sowing does not see the results of their labor, (Eccl.11:4-6). Another comes along later and reaps what we have sown. But this should not discourage us because, as I said before, we are not responsible for the results, God is through his Spirit. Others come along and reap what we have sown and both receive blessings and joy. The sower and the reaper are labours together in God's vineyard. God will allow us to reap

some of what we sow for encouragement and joy, Psm. 126:6.

Acts 26:1-3; 19-29....This is probably where the song "*Almost Persuaded*" came from. Also Felix, the Roman governor before Festus, had heard the gospel earlier from Paul and trembled and wanted to wait for a more convenient time, Acts 24:24,25. But money was even more important to him than his soul, v-26,

Sometimes we are confronted by those who are in pain because of circumstances in their lives, like losing a loved one. In this case it is usually best to keep your line of witnessing on your testimony and the love and care of God through Jesus Christ, John 3:16; 1 John 4:9,10; Eph. 2:12-14; Phil 4:6,7; John 14:1-3. Jesus knows what it feels like to be poor, to sorrow, to lose a loved one, to suffer, to be deeply distressed in the soul. He is a saviour who can feel our pain and sympathize with us and because of that he can also help us, Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16.

Sometimes people come in fear of the hereafter, fear of death, fear of judgement. When they are confronted with death, either of a friend, relative, or some other way, like, suicide, where a person sees themselves there, they are convicted of a need. They often don't know what that need is, but they know they need help. In this case it may be good to show them that their fear is justified, for instance, Rom. 14:11,12; 2:16; 2 Thes. 1:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:3-5. But God has comfort for those who fear, Acts 10:34-43; John 3:16,18; 5:24; 1 Thes. 5:9,10

What if a person says that they are good, they follow the law? See Gal. 2:16, 3:10,11; Rom. 3:20-23; Acts 13:36-39.

We are to preach repentance and faith, Acts 20:21

