

Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Witnesses

Scripture Reading: Acts 1.1-11.

Acts 1:8 *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the furthest part of the earth.*

The Lord Jesus told the disciples that they were to be witnesses to Him. It was a name describing a function. This word in this fashion is mostly found in The Acts, and the letters personally written by the disciples. (See for example John 19.35, 1 Peter 5.1) In The Acts it is repeatedly used to explain the role of a Christian in telling others what they themselves had experienced. There is something significant in this. Let us examine it.

First, the word is used by the disciples concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord. There are five such uses in The Acts. It is used twice of the legal witnesses to authorities against the disciples. See Acts 6.13 and 7.58. It is used three times by the apostle Paul to describe his experience of conversion to the Lord. See Acts 22.15, 22.20 and 26.16. On two occasions it was used by the disciples discussing their ministry with one another, but mostly it is used in public proclamation or in defence of their ministry before authorities. They simply told what they knew.

Witnessing testifies to the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Look up Acts 2.23, 3.15, 5.30-32, 10.39-41 and 13.28-31. In each case the emphasis is on the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. This is the powerhouse of real Christianity. Without our identifying faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christianity is only another religion. Why is this so?

It is only through the death of Jesus Christ that our sins are dealt with. We are cleansed and forgiven 1 John 1.7, 1 Peter 1.18&19, Ephesians 1.7-9

We have power to live lives that are holy and pleasing to God. Romans 6.5-10, Colossians 3.1

It is through the resurrection of Jesus

Christ that we are transformed into His image. This means that we shall be like Jesus. See 1 John 3.2, Romans 8.17-25

It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the power of Satan is overcome. Revelation 12.11, John 12.31, Hebrews 2.14.

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that crowns the redemptive plan of God and changes sinful men. The one Who died for us is risen to live in us, and the life which He lives in us by faith is the life of victory. John 15.1-8. It is no wonder then that the men who saw this event occur and personally benefited from it, witnessed to it with all the energy they possessed, despite the opposition of the authorities.

Witnessing gives an explanation to others of the nature and source of the power of God in our lives.

1 Peter 3:15 . . . *be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and reverence.*

‘Witness’ as a word has at the base the concept of a testimony. We tell what we know to be true. It has a legal connotation, as one giving evidence before a court of law, the truthful answering of questions.

Witness does not exclude an active outreach to others, provided it is appropriate and acceptable. But we should not assume that we are to answer questions no one is asking. If no one is asking us these questions, possibly we are not filled with the joy and wisdom of the Lord, filled as we ought to be by the spirit of God.

There is a difference between a witness and an evangelist who has a special ability of bringing others to Christ. (Acts 1.8, Ephesians 4.11 and 2 Timothy 4.5) Most Christians do not have this special gift and those who do should use their ability well as stewards of God’s grace, and be encouraged and supported by others. Romans 12.6&7. The Bible teaches that they are Christ’s gift to His Church. However all are able to be a witness, sharing their own experience.

And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Revelation 12.11

Witnessing is the overflow of the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were to await the coming of the Holy Spirit before venturing on this great commission. The reason for this is that it is the Holy Spirit who directs the outreach ministry of the Church. John 14.15-20, 15.26&27, 16.13-16.

The Holy Spirit revealing Jesus Christ to and in them controlled them, and their outreach was the overflow of that experience. This is how it ought to be.

Witnessing is the activity which will usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.

When reading Acts 1.8, realise that it is the answer to a question in the previous verses. Couple this with Matthew 24.14. Why is this so?

Because men need a saviour. Romans 3.23.

Because evil is rampant and man is caught in a devolution of wickedness, bringing on the annihilation of God’s creation. Mark 13.20, Psalm 53.2&3, Acts 14.16. Romans 1.20-32, and as an example Revelation 16.13-15.

Because God is just. The sin of the nations demands justice. God has decreed that the nations shall have the opportunity and encouragement of salvation unto righteousness. Luke 24.43-49, Acts 17.30.

Welcome

Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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