

Call to Obedience #454
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The Challenge of Witnessing

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For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20).

This was the response of Peter and John after they had been arrested for witnessing and were forbidden to ever speak of Jesus again: *...we cannot but speak...* of our Lord. In other words, they were then addicted to witnessing. Jeremiah said: *Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?* (Jer. 23:29).

My friend, where are you in your witnessing today? Are you addicted to it as the first Christians were? Or are you struggling with speaking openly about your Savior to strangers? If there is any one measure that reveals the state of our spiritual condition, it is witnessing. The disciples could not shut up. Many of us cannot get started. We have allowed the devil to shut us up. If he can shut our mouths, he can destroy our church.

The early Christians, because they refused to shut up even in a hostile Roman empire, after 300 years of witnessing, finally caused the Roman Emperor, Constantine, to declare Christianity as the religion of the state. Think of that, by just plain, uninterrupted witnessing, even without the printed word, the church was able to triumph over paganism!

Unfortunately, the opposite has happened long-ago in most of Europe and more recently in Christianized North America. In these continents as a whole, Christians have gone silent and therefore paganism has invaded their churches. It is indeed unavoidable that paganism will invade our hearts due to the lack of witnessing. Worldliness trickles into our hearts with any disobedience.

Unequivocally, I believe that the root of the problem in witnessing is the lack of intimacy between the Christian and his Lord. It is expressed in this verse which refers to the Pharisee's first observation of the disciples of Jesus: *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they*

were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, **that they had been with Jesus** (Acts 4:13 emphasis added).

Yes, the disciples had been with Jesus for three years. But the Pharisees were wrong in that they attributed the disciples' boldness on Pentecost to those three years. Not so! The real reason why these disciples had boldness was that this Jesus, who had been with them until 10 days before Pentecost, was now in them. There is a world of difference between *with* and *in*. Remember that Peter was *with* Jesus when he struck off a servant's ear and Jesus had to rebuke him. And later, when Peter was at the house of the high priest, he was still physically *with* Jesus—only a few feet away—but he lacked boldness to speak of Him when asked to do so. Jesus was not yet inside of Peter in the person of the Holy Spirit. Again, can you see the difference between *with* and *in*?

And it will be the same with you. When the Holy Spirit is abiding in you, you will have boldness and you will start acting like Jesus. Because the Holy Spirit is abiding in you, Jesus will witness through you using your lips to say the words. They will pour out of you. Yes, my friend, while you are abiding, your mouth becomes His mouth; your feet become His feet; your hands become His hands; your body becomes His body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. You will speak.

Therefore, when you are standing in front of a shoe salesman and you have the opportunity to witness, you may not have enough boldness to do it even if you had been to prayer meeting or church last night, or if you have read through your Bible 20 times, or if you went to Bible school. You do not obtain boldness to witness from the fumes of yesterday's spiritual enrichment. You do not get it from a textbook which has no power in it, no life in it and no boldness in it. It is nothing but paper and ink. You need more than that to be a witness. Yesterday's manna will not do you any good today. Why give old bread to the sinner who needs your witness when he needs fresh bread from heaven? Why give him smoke when he needs fire; why give him a scorpion when he needs an egg? When old bread or smoke is all you can give him, it means you are disconnected from heaven just like he is!

It may also mean that you have become lazy. My friend, it takes time and work to start a fire and to keep it going. In the same manner when you witness, you enter into a war and you need to be prepared for battle. You must get your heart and soul ready by putting on the armor of God. You must be praised up and be firmly planted on God's promises.

As Jesus was never disconnected from His father, neither should you be. Therefore, Paul admonishes us: *...but ever be filled and stimulated with the Holy Spirit* (Eph. 5:18 AMPC). Yes, ever, meaning always. You must never be disconnected from your Lord. That is dangerous. If you are disconnected, you will have consequences. Putting it yet another way: you cannot bottle up the power of the Holy Spirit that you experienced yesterday. That is because the Holy Spirit is a Person. You cannot bottle up this Person. He cannot be bottled up and then released whenever you pull the cork or push a button. You only have the power when you have the Person of the Holy Spirit. It is only when you are moment-by-moment being filled and refreshed by the Holy Spirit that you will have boldness.

Now look at this verse again. The disciples were observed to show boldness followed by a list of their “disqualifications:” *unlearned and ignorant men*. And this is marvelous by any earthly measure: these mostly teenaged disciples should have been unable and unfit to open their mouths. But the multitude recognized that these disciples witnessed with a power that was otherworldly. Praise the Lord! In fact, their lack of education and ignorance were the fulfillment of **prophecy** (Matt. 10:18; 1 Cor. 1:27). Also, remember how the disciples were previously worried about what to say when they would be taken before councils and courts. They wanted to know ahead of time what they should say. Jesus told them to not worry about it or even think about it. The Holy Spirit would tell them in those moments what to say. And that worked from the day of Pentecost onward and it will still work for you today. Another benefit of the disciples’ ignorance was that it caused them to trust God with all their heart so much the more. What can be better than that? So, it does not matter how uneducated you are, how awkward you are, how backward you are or whether you know any Scriptures. If you are in Christ and Christ is in you, then you are a powerful witness. So again, textbook witnessing, man’s tools for witnessing and men’s training for witnessing rank very low on getting the job done if the vigor of Christ’s presence is not found inside of you when you are witnessing.

And now you ask: “Why are there so few people who have this intimacy?” It is because there is a high price to be paid for intimacy with Jesus and the Holy Spirit: you must come clean in your heart, remain clean and then be totally obedient. That means you must be a full-time worker for Jesus, thus being one who has adapted your whole lifestyle to this kind of calling. Oh yes, you must still earn your bread by being a carpenter as Jesus was, a city bus

driver, an engineer, a teacher or some other occupation, but those things become less important as you fix your eyes on eternity. You know what I mean.

So then, as the early disciples were called to witness, we are also called to witness as Charles Spurgeon said the following:

It is ours in our measure to be witnesses of that which the Lord has revealed to us, and it is at our peril that we hide the precious revelation. First, we must see and hear, or we shall have nothing to tell; but when we have done so, we must be eager to bear our testimony. It must be personal: "Thou shalt be." It must be for Christ: "Thou shalt be his witness." It must be constant and all absorbing; we are to be this above all other things and to the exclusion of many other matters. Our witness must not be to a select few who will cheerfully receive us but to "all men"—to all whom we can reach, young or old, rich or poor, good or bad. We must never be silent like those who are possessed by a dumb spirit; for the text before us is a command, and a promise, and we must not miss it—"Thou shalt be his witness." "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord."—Excerpt from February 10: <http://archive.spurgeon.org/fcb/fcb-bod.htm>

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Hallelujah!

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