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Acts of the Apostles

Living Praise Presbyterian Church - Home Cell Group Bible Study Feb-Jul 2001



WE ARE WITNESSES

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Me? A Witness?

Two weeks ago the Hawk River had overflowed and people had been evacuated. But finally the rains had stopped and life was getting back to normal.

One evening, twelve-year-old Derek Baxter was walking home from a convenience store. As he stepped onto Hawk Bridge, he hesitated. The wooden planks under his feet felt different. He stopped in disbelief. Half of the bridge was gone!

Horrified, Derek ran back to the store. "Mr. Simon! The bridge is out! Hurry - get the sheriff!"

Derek knew dozens of cars traveled that highway and lives were in danger. Because he was the only witness to the broken bridge, he couldn't simply walk away. He had to give a warning.

As Christians, we know that a serious danger lies ahead for people who don't know Jesus. We too have an urgent message to deliver.

The Apostle Paul witnessed everywhere he went, telling all kinds of people about Jesus. He had a deep love for his own Jewish people, but he knew God also had called him to witness to the Gentiles (those who were not Jewish). God had said:

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

Paul's goal was that all people would come to know Jesus as their Savior. You'll discover what was needed to get the job done as you read part of a letter he wrote to some fellow Christians in Roman 10:9-15.

"Come on, Mr. Simon, quick! Before a car comes!" As words tumbled from Derek's mouth, Mr. Simon simply stared at him. Then he chuckled.

"That's real good, Derek, real good. I almost fell for it. But I've got work to do. Now scoot."

Almost sobbing, Derek ran from the store. He remembered all the times he had told Mr. Simon some tale or another, only to laugh when the old man fell for his joke. But what could he do now?

Just then he saw the headlights of a car down the highway. Quickly Derek ran to the road, ripped off his shirt, and began waving it wildly over his head. As the car drew near, he yelled as loudly as he could, "The bridge is out! The bridge is out!"

The car passed, and Derek ran after it sobbing. Suddenly the driver braked, reversed, and turned, quickly maneuvering his car to block off the highway. "I'll get help," he shouted as he ran toward the store.

Derek did his best to warn Mr. Simon about the danger, but the storekeeper wouldn't believe him. He turned Derek away because he thought the boy was joking again.

Many Christians are afraid to witness because they think people will reject what they say. And that might happen. Not everyone you share the good news about Jesus with will immediately believe it. Some may argue. A few will laugh. Others won't even talk about it. A few might even get angry. But some will be eager to hear what you have to say.

You'll see the kind of reception Paul and his co-workers experienced as you read Acts 14:1-7; 17:1-10.

Some may reject but others may accept the message. And it's no different today. Though Paul wanted all people to believe in Christ, Paul knew that his responsibility was to witness as God wanted him to. And leave the result to God on whether people would believe or not. He was later to say:

"I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21).

(from *Family Walk*, August 1989)



“I met Anne at the hospital where I was working one evening. She was in an isolation room. She had hepatitis from using contaminated needles to take drugs. In time, our relationship grew, and Anne came to know Jesus. She recovered from hepatitis and went off drugs. She worked at healing her relationship with her parents. Later, she married and established a Christian home. Anne’s story makes it clear that the power of the Holy Spirit is not only demonstrated through physical healing , but also in the “complete healing” that includes every aspect of our lives.” -- Phyllis J. Le Peau

REFLECTION:

In your experience, what causes non-Christians to be open to hearing about Jesus from you?

DISCOVERY:

1. Read Acts 3. The outreach in Jerusalem continues as Peter and John respond to a crippled beggar. What is the significance of the fact that they found him at the temple gate?

2. What were Peter and John unable to give the crippled man? What did they give instead?

3. How did the crippled man react to the miracle?



Most believers are convinced that it is the pastor’s responsibility to bring people into the church as well as into the kingdom of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Scripture is clear on this point. Pastors were given by God to the church to equip the people to do the work...Sermons are not God’s primary method for reaching people. People are His primary method for reaching people. What kind of people? Men and women whose lives and life-styles have been deeply affected by the truths of Scripture, people who have discovered the wonderful Spirit-filled life.

God is looking for imperfect men and women who have learned to walk in moment-by-moment dependence on the Holy Spirit. Christians who have come to terms with their fears, inadequacies, and failures. Believers who have become discontent with “surviving” and have taken the time to investigate everything God has to offer in this life.

God’s method for reaching this generation and every generation, is not preachers and sermons. It is Christians whose life-styles are empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. People are the key to reaching people.

(from *The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life*) **Charles Stanley**

4. What opportunity did this miracle provide for Peter?
5. How did Peter explain the healing of the crippled man?
6. How does response of the people to this miracle contrast with that of the beggar (vv8; 11-12)?
 - a. What can we learn from Peter's example about spreading the gospel?
 - b. Why is it important for us to encourage others to follow Jesus?
 - c. What does it mean to be bold witnesses for Christ?
7. What do you think it meant that "complete healing" (v16) was given to the beggar?
 - d. What healing do you need in your life?
 - e. Take some time to pray for one another's need for healing.



A Topical Study: The Church

The Lord added to the church daily
(Acts 2:47)

1. THE WORD CHURCH

The English word “church” comes from the Greek *kuriakos* (meaning “belonging to the Lord”), but in the New Testament it translates another Greek word, *ekklesia* (meaning “called out ones”).

Ekklesia is essentially a post-Pentecost word. It appears a few times in the Greek translation (Septuagint) of the Old Testament, translated into English as “congregation.” It appears more than a hundred times in the New Testament, all but three distributed rather evenly from Acts to Revelation.

2. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

When one compares the Old and New Testaments, many basic things remain the same. Examples of such unchanging truths are: the Giver of Salvation (God); the way of salvation (by God’s grace); the saved people (the redeemed of God). Everyone who will dwell with God in heaven will be there because his sins were atoned for by Jesus’ blood.

Concerning some things, there is progression and development as one moves from the Old to the New Testament. For example, God has used different ways of revealing truth (Heb 1:1-2). The functioning of each of the Persons of the Trinity has varied from time to time. During His earthly ministry, Jesus served in a state of humiliation. Now He serves in a state of exaltation. The Holy Spirit ministers today in a fuller way than His service is described in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament most of God’s people are of the stock of Israel. In the New Testament, God’s people are from all groups. For this and other reasons

the new word “church” appears in the New Testament to represent this new constituency of God’s family.

New Testament references to “church” are of three different kinds:

1. Invisible church - all believers, whether alive or dead, who are members of Christ’s body (Eph 1:22-23; 5:23, 25-27). “Where Christ is, there is the Church.”
2. Visible church at large - a constituency of all believers living at any one time (Acts 8:3; cf. “churches in Acts 9:31).
3. Visible local church - a fellowship of believers who worship in a given locality (e.g. Antioch, Acts 13:1). It is possible for people to have their names on the membership roll of a church and not be believers (cf. Rev 2,3).

3. THE FUNCTIONING CHURCH

The church is

1. for the praise of God’s glory (Eph 1:6; 2:7)
2. for the witness of truth (1 Tim 3:15)
3. for the salvation of men (Mk 16:15; 1 Cor 4:1; 2 Cor 5:19).

3. THE TRIUMPHANT CHURCH

The church in the world is sometimes referred to as the militant church because of its mandate to speak and act in a dark and evil society where Satan has been permitted to exercise much power. But one day when Christ comes it will rise as the triumphant church and enter into the rewards of victory (Matt 13:36-43; Rom 8:18-23; 1 Thess 4:14-17; Eph 5:25-27; 1 John 3:2; Rev 7:9ff).

A Final Thought:

“You ... *killed* the Prince of life!”
(3:14-15, italics added) charged Peter.
It is truly a contradiction for anyone
to reject Jesus Christ.

Sources:

- Family Walk, August 1989.
- Irving Jensen, **Acts - A Self-study Guide**.
- Phyllis J. Le Beau, **Acts**.
- Max Lucado. **Life Lessons with Max Lucado: Book of Acts**.