

Be My Witness

Acts 1:1-8 New American Standard Bible

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. ³ To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of things regarding the kingdom of God. ⁴ Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

*⁶ So, when they had come together, they began asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ But He said to them, "It is not for you to know periods of time or appointed times which the Father has set by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth."*

Introduction

Last Sunday, I spoke about the Great Commission. Christ sends us out to all the nations with the good news. To be faithful to His call, I challenged all of us to take up the Great Commission as the goal for 2021. I also recommended everyone to: adopt a nation, adopt a family member and a friend who do not know the Lord yet.

This morning, I would like to continue talking about the Great Commission. To be more specific, I would like to focus on what we need in our evangelism efforts. Two things we need. The Holy Spirit and prayer.

We need the Holy Spirit, God's help, as we go out to the world with His message. The Holy Spirit empowers us to complete this great task of sharing the good news with others. Without His help, we will fail. That help comes only when we invoke His help through our devoted prayer.

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No soldier is sent out into battle unprotected, or with bare hands. Every soldier is equipped in full gear, both offense and defense. Likewise, Jesus sends us out to the world fully equipped. We are equipped with, first of all, the full armor of God such as: *truth, salvation, righteousness, faith, the Word of God, and the gospel* (Ephesians 6). Most importantly, He sends us with the divine help: the Holy Spirit.

Here's what the Holy Spirit does for us: He gives us courage to speak the Word boldly (Acts 4:31). He teaches us what words to say. He also affirms our gospel message with miracles such as healing and speaking in tongues.

In spiritual warfare, and in the field of evangelism, the help of the Holy Spirit is crucial. If we rely on only our own might and wisdom, we will fail. With God's help, however, we win. The Scripture affirms: '**Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,**' says the LORD of armies (Zechariah 4:6).

That's why before He sent out His disciples to the world, Jesus asked them to remain in Jerusalem until they received the power from above: ⁴..., He commanded them **not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5).

He continued, ⁸ ... you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Power of the Holy Spirit first, then become Jesus' witnesses.

For your info. Look at verse 8: You shall be My **witnesses** (μαρτυρες). The Greek word for 'witness' here is 'martyr.' Yes, that 'martyr': *a person who is killed because of their religious beliefs*. When Jesus used the word here, it didn't carry the same meaning as today. It was used for someone who tells the truth about Jesus. 'Martyr' meant Christ's believer who shared the gospel with others. Then, as disciples went out to the world and witnessed, they got persecuted, imprisoned, stoned, and even executed. So, the word 'martyr' fast became associated with the *witness's physical death*. Anyway, we are called to be Christ's witnesses, martyrs. But, to do so, we must have the help from above. Remember: the Holy Spirit first. Witness later. I would like to remind you of three things.

First, **embrace the word: witness**. It's not something to be afraid of or ashamed of. Do not be shy of it, either. Consider it, rather, an honor and privilege to be His witness. We are commissioned to rescue the perishing. You are called to be Christ's witness. So am I. We are called to tell the stories of Jesus to the world. We are called to share with others what Christ has done for us. Have you noticed that God primarily relies on us, not on angels, to proclaim His salvation work in Jesus Christ? To bring people to God, He uses our life stories and testimonies about Jesus: how He has appeared to us, how He delivered us from the power of sin and death, how we are healed and rescued from spiritual oppression, how He saved us from our sins, how He gave us the forgiveness of sins through our repentance,

and how He has given us eternal life. It is the witness's job to tell the whole world about Jesus.

Romans 10:15 says this: *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.* You are the bringer of the great news of salvation to those who don't know the Lord. Don't be ashamed of being such a great messenger of God's love and forgiveness. Be proud of your call. Embrace the word 'witness.'

Next, **invoke the power of God** to accompany your witness of Christ. Mark 16:15-18 shows God's promise for us. Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ *The one who has believed and has been baptized will be saved; but the one who has not believed will be condemned.* ¹⁷ *These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;* ¹⁸ *they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Let's check it out again what kind of signs and wonders will accompany us: cast out demons, speak with new tongues, pick up serpents, no poison will harm, and the sick will recover.

You may wonder: why, then, do we not see such miracles and signs any more in our church? Has God changed His mind? Has His promise in Mark 16 expired and is no longer good to us today? No, God has not changed His mind and His promise is still good to us. Then, how do we explain the lack of signs and wonders in the life of the Church today?

Two possible answers. First, *we don't go out.* This promise was given in the context of evangelism. No miracles happen when we do not share the gospel. Simple as that. Next, *we don't invoke God's help* in our evangelism efforts. Remember the promise: Ask and it will be given (Matthew 7:7)? Since we don't ask for God's help in evangelism, therefore, we don't get it. Here's the reality. Most of us today are happy with what we have been doing in the church: worship and charity works, but no outreach effort or asking for the power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. *No evangelism. No prayer. No miracles.* This is the reality.

Personal testimony on the demonstration of Holy Spirit. It was the summer of 1974. First time I ever witnessed the power of God's Spirit in evangelism. I was in high school. Baby Christian. One day, I was sent out with another Christian for street evangelism. Neither of us did it before. Two of us mustered our courage and struck a conversation with a street peddler, middle-aged man. After a brief introduction, I found myself reading to a complete stranger a booklet called "4 Spiritual Laws" published by Campus Crusade for Christ. Within five minutes, lo and behold, at the end of my presentation, the man accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. With tears. Praise God!

That day, I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit working with us when we shared the gospel message. No fancy words or convincing arguments brought the peddler to Christ. When I obeyed the Great Commission, the Spirit of God did the rest: He opened up the heart and ears of the man to accept Jesus Christ. Invoke the help of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, **devote yourself to prayer** before you go out and witness. I have studied how the Early Church believers became powerful witnesses of Jesus. The gospel spread like a wildfire when the Holy Spirit confirmed their words with miracles. Study the entire Book of Acts, and you will understand what I am talking about. The Book of Acts is about the Acts of the apostles. To be more accurate, it is about the Acts of the Holy Spirit who worked with the apostles. It was the Holy Spirit who initiated and planned the working of the gospel and guided the apostles. He sent them out to the world and confirmed their message with wonders and signs such as casting out evil spirits, healing, and even raising the dead.

So, I asked myself: what is the key to the success of evangelism in the Book of Acts? It was the Holy Spirit. How and when did the Holy Spirit empower the Early church believers? Circumstances may vary. He worked with Peter. He worked with Paul. He worked with Philip. He worked with Ananias. However, one thing is common: the Holy Spirit worked with them *when they went out and prayed for help*.

You heard about the Holy Spirit coming down on the believers on the day of Pentecost, right? This is how it happened. After Jesus ascended into Heaven, for the next ten days, about 120 disciples stayed in Jerusalem, in one place, the Upper Room. And “they constantly joined together in prayer” (Acts 1:14). Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down upon them like the tongue of fire. Here you see an inseparable connection between devoted prayers and the demonstration of the Holy Spirit.

So, here’s the key: to be an effective witness of Christ, we need the help from the Holy Spirit. And to have His help with us, we must devote ourselves to prayer. Earnestly. Constantly. Together.

Prayer is the key. By prayer and intercession, we must invoke the divine help to confirm our gospel message. E.g. Kevin Zedai. He worked for years as flight attendant. He would meet and witness to countless people on the plane. 5 flights a day. Several hundreds of people to wait on every day. The problem was that he was extremely shy. So, he prayed and prayed. The Lord didn’t leave him alone in sharing the good news with others. On the contrary, the Lord equipped Kevin with a unique prophetic gift. Before he shared the gospel with a stranger, he could tell instantly what the person was up to or against. One time, the Lord revealed to him about this lady’s past history. When Kevin told this lady what he had seen in his mind, she was so shocked and convinced that she eventually came to the

Lord. We succeed with the demonstration of the Holy Spirit in evangelism preceded by devoted prayer.

Conclusion

Here's the bottom line: we are called to fulfill the Great Commission. When we go out with the gospel, we need the Holy Spirit to work with us and through us. The demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power only comes from our prayers. So, folks, throughout this year, let us devote ourselves to prayer so that we may become powerful witnesses for Christ (Colossians 4:2). Amen.