



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 7

August 2, 2020

No. 31

Only Witnesses Can Witness

by David Hartsell

Today many sincere religious people talk about “witnessing for The Lord.” You might hear this expressed in different ways. “I was won to Jesus by witnessing.” Or “I must take the time to witness to others.” Or “I’m the only witness at my job.” Though the motives of such people are often pure, they misunderstand how the Bible uses the terms “witness or testify.” This might seem harmless. Yet, there are serious spiritual consequences when we misuse the idea of witnessing for Christ.

The Bible uses “witnessing” in a special way. Jesus once met a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. He asked her for some water and a conversation ensued. During their discussion, our Lord revealed to her secret things about her life. He convicted her of sin but she could tell he genuinely cared for her. She became thrilled with Jesus’ words, ran into the city, and persuaded many to hear Him. “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He told me all that I ever did.’” **(Jn.4:39)** On another occasion those who watched Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead “bore witness” to it. **(Jn.12:17-18)** Witnessing was not describing how they felt but what they had seen and heard. John testified that he and the other apostles had seen, heard, and handled The Lord. **(1 Jn.1:1-2)**

God empowered certain people to witness by their words or through miracles they performed. John the Baptist was filled with The Spirit from birth. **(Lk.1:13-17)**

After our Lord’s baptism, John saw The Spirit descending as a dove upon Him. This act identified Jesus as divine. “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” **(Jn.1:32-34)** God, The Father, proclaimed Jesus’ deity through “miracles, wonders, and signs.” **(Acts 2:22)** Jesus even cast out demons by the Holy Spirit. **(Matt.12:28)** Special revelation can make one a witness of Jesus Christ.

What are the dangers of misusing “witnessing?” First, it can convince people that they can be saved in ways other than God’s way. Many today teach we must simply ask Jesus to “come into our hearts and make us Christians.” They then want to “witness” to others about their salvation “experience.” Peter preached that repentance and baptism will take away sins. **(Acts 2:38)** Salvation is not primarily about “feeling” but obedience. Next, it makes God look like the author of confusion. He is not! **(1 Cor.14:33)** Many religious people testify to false ideas. Faith only and present day possession of spiritual gifts are not supported by God’s Word. God isn’t the one confused; we are. Finally, the “witnessing” concept diverts us from the message to the experience. It is true that the Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing but that was after he had been taught and had obeyed the gospel. **(Acts 8:30-39)** Remember, only witnesses can witness.



Those ‘Limited’ New Testament Churches

- by Philip Mullins

You don’t read of the church in Jerusalem building a gymnasium. There is no evidence the church at Antioch had a softball diamond. According to the New Testament, the church at Philippi never had a pizza party. The church at Thessalonica is never said to have conducted a sewing or exercise class. Then how did those poor, limited churches ever do any good in evangelism?

According to the philosophy of most modern religious groups, the world must be enticed with recreational and social programs. It is through these services that souls can be reached and saved. There is a problem with this thinking - it has

no foundation in the Bible.

The church at Jerusalem converted lost souls and grew rapidly (Acts 5:14; 6:7). The church at Antioch had a great impact on its community with the gospel and it also sent out preachers to convert the lost in other places (Acts 11:20-26). The church at Thessalonica, in spite of intense persecution, prospered to the point that they were an example to other churches (Acts 17:1-4; I Thessalonians 1:6-9). Yet, there is not one shred of evidence from divine history that they were successful because of recreational and social programs. One might argue the times have changed. Yes and no. The Greco-Roman culture loved its entertainment and athletic competition as much as our own. Gymnasiums and coliseums could be found in any of the major cities. Plays were common place. Why then didn't the New Testament churches seize upon these activities for mediums for the gospel? Because the Lord never wanted them to do it!

The Lord Jesus is still head of His body, the church, and His commandments are the same. His method for spreading the gospel is summed up in Philippians 2:15-16 "...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life..." It is when Christ's people live the gospel and preach the gospel that we do the Lord's work the Lord's way. Any other method is without Christ's approval and His blessings. Thus, any other method is, in the long run, doomed to fail.

Conscience

by Robert Turner

Christianity is centered upon Christ. As disciples, we are committed to being "followers", not "thinkers". Our highest ambition should be to learn and do as He directs – not as we think, or what seems good to us. This is true for several reasons, not the least of which is the simple fact that He told us to obey Him. Because He IS our Savior, and our Head, it is both appropriate and essential for us to do so. There is a direct connection between obeying Him and divine blessings. Only in obedience do we demonstrate the attitude He demands, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say"? (Lk 6:46)

There is nothing casual about true service and submission to Him, and if we intend to be true disciples, we must diligently determine what He said. So often we hear, "it doesn't make any difference what you believe", or "there are many ways to heaven", or "one church is as good as another", etc. – from those who claim to be His disciples. The question is: Where in all the words of Christ can such ideas be found? It is obvious that such claims have greatly eroded our concern for resting our faith in His words. Men no longer feel any urgency about the real teaching of Jesus.

What did Jesus really say about such notions as mentioned above? Well, He said, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it". (Mt 7:14). He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the father but by Me." (Jn 14:6). He said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day". (Jn 12:48). He said, "but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men....every plant that my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up..." (Mt 15:7, 13) In the light of what He really said, and because we claim to be His disciples, at the very least we should not be saying the opposite! After all He has done for us, and out of our professed love for Him, we must admit that He deserves better!

Let us do Him the courtesy of not "putting words in His mouth", and if we claim to be His disciples, let us seek to learn and follow what He really said!