

WHAT IS A WITNESS ?? ??

INTRODUCTION

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ it is imperative that we understand *God's Person, God's priority* and *God's program*. As we subject ourselves to the written Word and as we baptize our minds in the truth of God, we discover that the concepts and ideas which we have held for so long must be amended in favor of divine Revelation. May God help us to **learn, re-learn** and **un-learn!**

This is certainly true in the area of missions. In no uncertain terms our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that we are to be HIS WITNESSES unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). And yet, what does this really mean? Most often people talk about *what a witness does* and *what a witness says* and *where a witness goes*, but the question we want to consider is far more basic: **What IS a witness?** It is of crucial importance that we have the proper concept of what a **witness** really is. For what purpose did God save us? Why did He leave us here on the earth for a time before taking us to heavenly glory? Does our idea of what a **witness** is conform to what God says a **witness** is?

May our God open the eyes of our understanding so that we might catch a glimpse of why God has saved us and why we are here. May God then enable us to be His faithful *witnesses*, bringing glory to His Name, and thus fulfilling the purpose for which we have been created (Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11).

What is a witness? Our concern is not to study what a **witness** *does*. Neither do we want to know what a **witness** *says* or where a **witness** *goes*. The question we want to consider is simply this: *What is a witness?*

I. OLD TESTAMENT USAGE

A. Criminal Cases.

The term "witness" (Hebrew noun) is often used in the context of criminal law. A **witness** is one who has personally observed a crime and is thus qualified to testify concerning the facts of what he has seen. In the law, a murderer was to be put to death by the mouth of two or three **witnesses** – those who had personally observed the killing (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Each witness had personal knowledge of the criminal act. He had seen the act of murder take place and he was able to verbally declare, "This man is a murderer. I witnessed it." A **witness**, therefore, must be one who has had a personal knowledge of something.

It is helpful for us to observe God's attitude toward false **witnesses**: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him...a **false witness** that speaketh lies" (Proverbs 6:16,19). Indeed, the prohibition concerning bearing false **witness** was written into the very core of the decalogue itself as seen by the ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear **false witness** against thy neighbour" (Ex. 20:16; cf. Deut.5:20; 19:16-18 and Proverbs 12:17).

A false **witness** is one who knows something, but who fails to accurately and truthfully communicate what he knows. As such he is abhorrent to the God of truth.

B. Legal Agreements.

As illustrated in the Old Testament, **witnesses** were often called upon to observe legal transactions. A good example is found in Ruth 4:9-11 where the elders and the people were **witnesses** concerning that which Boaz purchased. Likewise, Jeremiah purchased the field of Hanameel in the presence of **witnesses** (Jer. 32:9-12). These **witnesses** were able to confirm what had taken place. Their very presence qualified them to attest to this fact: "A legal transaction has been made. This we know because we are **witnesses**." Again we may conclude that a **witness** is one who has had *personal knowledge* of something.

C. Inanimate Things.

Not only are people declared to be witnesses in the Old Testament but inanimate things as well. To understand what a **witness** is, it is essential to learn why certain inanimate objects were described by this term. How can a lifeless object be a **witness**? What is it that makes it a **witness**? To answer these questions we must examine the Scriptures and consider several of the various inanimate objects which are declared to be **witnesses**.

1. The Carcass of a Dead Animal (Exodus 22:13).

The law of Moses made provision for the man who cared for another man's animal. If the animal should be torn in pieces by a wild beast, the man is not responsible for the loss. As evidence of what really happened, he is to bring the torn animal forth as a **witness**. The dead carcass is a **witness** because it *confirms the fact* that the man is not responsible.

2. The Heap of Stones (Genesis 31:48).

This heap of stones served as a visible sign of the agreement that was made between Jacob and Laban. A mere pile of rocks was a **witness** – it served as a reminder concerning the covenant that was made between the two men. From that time forth, whenever Jacob and Laban would view the heap, it would *cause them to think about* the agreement.

3. The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:19, 21).

The LORD warned Moses that Israel would fall into apostasy (31:16) and as a result they would incur the judgment of God (31:17). Moses, therefore, was instructed to write a song which would be a **witness** against Israel. This song is recorded in Deuteronomy 32. It is interesting that the song in and of itself was a **witness**. In the years to come whenever the people of Israel would read the words of this song they would be *reminded of this fact*: "If you disobey the LORD, you will be judged." The song *forced them to think about God* and His warnings.

Today in our country we have an illustration of this very thing. America is rapidly departing from the ways of righteousness. No doubt, if the downward trend continues we should expect the

judgment of God. The very coins which we carry in our pockets are **witnesses** against our nation. Whenever the words "IN GOD WE TRUST" are read, we are reminded of the principles upon which our nation was founded. These coins constantly attest to the fact that we ought to be trusting in the Lord. They are silent **witnesses**, but they communicate a message of great significance.

4. The Altar of the Two and a Half Tribes (Joshua 22:26-34).

The altar built by Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh was a **witness**. These tribes had chosen to settle on the East side of the Jordan, separated from the other Israelite tribes. This altar, though at first misinterpreted, was intended to stand as a declaration of the fact that these two and a half tribes had not forsaken the God of Israel. This was an unused altar; that is, no sacrifices were offered on it (22:29). Rather it stood as a silent **witness**. It never spoke a word, yet it conveyed a message. For generations to come, whenever the people would see the altar, it would draw their attention to the True and Living God, and the commitment these tribes had professed to make to Him.

To illustrate this we might think of the Liberty Bell which sits in Philadelphia. This symbol of our nation has ceased clanging for years, but its message continues to ring forth. Whenever we see the Liberty Bell it speaks to us of freedom and the principles which have made our nation great. Because of this we might say that it functions as a *witness*. It reminds us of certain facts about our country and *it causes us to think about* our nation.

5. The Great Stone (Joshua 24:26-27).

This large rock was a **witness**. It was a solemn reminder that the children of Israel had chosen to serve the LORD. The children of Israel had made a verbal affirmation to the effect that they would serve the LORD and obey His voice (24:24). Joshua knew the deceivableness of the human heart and so he took a great stone and set it up as a **witness** against the people. It was to continually point to the fact that they had chosen to serve the LORD and that God would surely turn and consume them if they should forsake their God (24:20).

6. The Pillar in Egypt (Isaiah 19:19-20).

This prophecy declares that there will be a pillar at the border of Egypt which will be a **witness**. A lifeless, stone shaft – and yet God says it is a **witness**. It speaks no words, but *it declares the fact* that God shall indeed deliver the Egyptians.

7. The Rain and the Seasons (Acts 14:17).

In this New Testament passage we see that the rain which falls and the fruitful seasons that we enjoy are witnesses (the Greek word for "**witness**" is *marturon*, compare the English word "martyr"). The rain which falls and the fruitful seasons that we enjoy are **witnesses**. They *draw our attention* to the goodness of God. They remind us year after year of the Lord's faithfulness.

8. The Creation (Psalm 19).

The word "**witness**" is not found in Psalm 19 but the idea is present nonetheless. Although creation is a silent **witness**, its message is clearly read. God's book of creation does not present a literacy problem because "there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:3). God's glory and God's power are clearly seen in creation (Romans. 1:20) by men throughout the earth (Psalm 19:3-4). Therefore the universe itself is a **witness** which points to the Creator and reminds us of His glorious power (Romans1:20) and His awesome design (compare Psalm 139:14). The things made point us to the divine Maker. The marvelous design which we see all around us points us to the grand Designer. Creation tells us of Christ the Creator (John 1:3; Col. 1:16). All nature silently proclaims this clear message: *"The Hand that made us is Divine!"*

9. Summary.

A dead carcass, a heap of stones, a song, an altar, a great stone, a pillar, rain, seasons and creation itself – all have been designated in the Scriptures as **witnesses**. From these several passages we can make certain observations. We have seen that a witness is an object which *draws attention* to some fact or reality. It is a *reminder* of something or someone . It is an object which points to something else, *forcing a person to think about* the reality that the witness represents. In conclusion, *a witness is something which draws attention to a truth, to a fact or to god himself.*

II. ISAIAH 43:10

A. Background.

Isaiah 43 is a glorious passage in which the LORD declares who He is to the nation Israel. He is the Creator and the Holy One of Israel – their Redeemer and Saviour. He is exalted infinitely above all that are called gods. None can compare with Him. He is the eternal and living LORD and apart from Him there is no God and no Saviour!

B. God's Glory.

In Isaiah 43:7 we are told the reason and purpose for which God created Israel:

"For I have created him FOR MY GLORY, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

We must pause at this point and reverently consider the awesome implications of this statement. The chief and ultimate purpose in creation and redemption and in all that God does is HIS GLORY—the manifestation and demonstration of who He is. Do we dare make anything else our priority? Do we dare minimize the one thing that God is concerned about more than anything else? God's glory is the very reason we are here:

"This people have I formed FOR MYSELF; they shall *shew forth* (declare, rehearse again and again) my praise" (ISAIAH 43:21).

To fix our eyes upon anything less than the glory of God can only result in disaster: "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36). Until we understand this, we know nothing. Only when we lay hold of this truth will we be in the place to understand what a **witness** is. The entire puzzle of God's purpose and program fits together only when the piece representing God's glory is placed into its rightful position of preeminence. To elevate anyone or anything else to occupy this sacred place results in blasphemy of the worst possible sort. **"I have created him for MY GLORY"** (Isaiah 43:7) **"For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My Name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another"** (Isaiah 48:11).

C. God's Witnesses.

"Ye are *my witnesses*, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 43:10)

Isaiah 43:10 might be called "the Acts 1:8 of the Old Testament." Here is introduced to us *the true Jehovah's Witnesses* (not the false Jehovah's Witnesses of today who proclaim that Jesus Christ is a mere creature and who know nothing of the glorious gospel of the grace of God): "Ye ARE *my witnesses*, saith the LORD (JEHOVAH)." Notice that the emphasis of this verse is not upon witnessing but upon **BEING a witness**. The verse does not emphasize what a **witness** does or what a **witness** says or where a **witness** goes, *but what a witness is!* The same emphasis is found in Acts 1:8 which does not say, "Ye shall witness" but it says "Ye shall **BE witnesses** unto Me" (or "Ye shall **BE My witnesses**").

In Isaiah 43:10 the LORD is declaring that the children of Israel are *His witnesses*. Israel, as a nation, was God's witness.

D. God's Purpose for His Witnesses.

"Ye are My witnesses, declares the LORD and My servant whom I have chosen: in order that (for the purpose that) ye may know and believe in Me and understand that I am He" (Isaiah 43:10).

The expression "in order that" represents a Hebrew word indicating purpose or intent. In other words, it answers the question "WHY?" Why was this nation chosen to be God's **witness**? For what purpose were the children of Israel His **witnesses**? In order to be His **witnesses**, what had to be true? What qualified these people to be **witnesses** of the ONE TRUE GOD? Isaiah 43:10 gives a three fold answer:

1. Know.

The first purpose was that Israel was to *know God*: "And ye are My witnesses that ye may *know*." The text does not say "And ye are My witnesses that *YE MAY GO*" (compare Mark 16:15). Before you GO there is something you need to KNOW! Indeed, there is SOMEONE you need to KNOW! The word "know" is the very common Hebrew verb for "know" (____) and it means "to know, to be acquainted with." Earlier in this study we learned that a **witness** is one

who has a personal knowledge of something. Here, we discover that God's **witnesses** *must know Him*. They must have a personal knowledge of God.

It is impossible to overemphasize this first point: **God's witnesses must know God**. How many times in the Bible do we read words such as these: "And YE SHALL KNOW that I am the LORD"? In the book of Ezekiel alone such a phrase is used over 60 times! (compare Ezekiel 28:22-26). God's purpose is TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN. God will make Himself known to all men eventually. God makes Himself known to His **witnesses** now.

How tragic are the words of Hosea the prophet: "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel; for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor KNOWLEDGE OF GOD in the land...My people are destroyed for LACK OF KNOWLEDGE" (Hosea 4:1,6). Because the knowledge of God was rejected the people of Israel failed to be true **witnesses** of Jehovah.

In the New Testament there is repeated emphasis upon the necessity of knowing our great God and Saviour:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee" (John 17:3)

"That I may know Him . . ." (Phil. 3:10)

". . . increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10)

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever!" (2 Pet. 3:18)

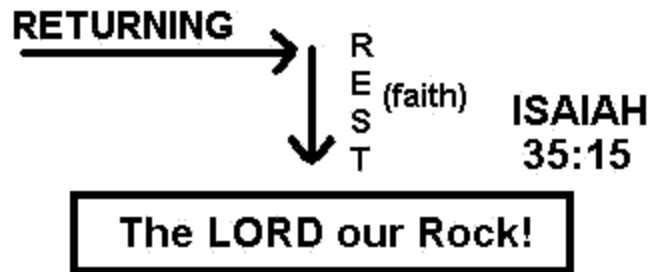
It is imperative that we know who God is. The knowledge of the holy One should be our overriding concern. Our continuous desire should be to acquaint ourselves with God in all the fullness of WHO HE IS. God's **witnesses** must have a PERSONAL knowledge of the Holy One, based upon a real and right personal relationship with Him!

2. Believe.

The second purpose was that Israel was to **believe** in God. It is from this Hebrew verb that we get our English word "Amen" and it conveys the meaning of "believe, trust, hold firm, rely upon." God's **witnesses** must not only know Him and be acquainted personally with Him, but they must depend and rely upon Him. They must rest all their weight upon the **WORTH** (Who He is), **WORK** (what He has done) and **WORD** (what He has said) of God. They must rest upon the God they know, believing that He is fully able to support them. They must rely completely upon what He says. Isaiah 30:15 may serve as an illustration:

"For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: In RETURNING and REST shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence (trust) shall be your strength."

This is illustrated on the following page ⇨



3. Understand.

The third purpose was that Israel was to *understand* who God really was: "that ye may...*understand* that I am He" (Isaiah 43:10). This Hebrew verb (___) means "to understand, discern, know with the mind." It involves a deeper and deepening knowledge and understanding of who God is. God's **witness** is to continually enter into a growing and deepening understanding of God (compare 2 Peter 3:18). God's **witness** must UNDERSTAND God before he can UNDERTAKE for God.

Why was Israel God's witness? *For the glorious purpose of knowing Him, believing and relying upon Him, and growing in a deeper understanding of who He is!* Before the believer can **glow** he must **know**. Before he can **behave** he must **believe!** Before he can **undertake** he must **understand** who God is!

E. The Meaning of the Term "Witness."

We have already discovered that a **witness** is one who has a personal knowledge of something. We have also concluded that a **witness** draws attention to a truth, to a fact or to God Himself. In Isaiah 43:10 Israel is declared to be God's **witness**. The children of Israel were to know the Living God and they were to constantly draw attention to who He was.

Pastor George F. Parsons has carefully defined the word "witness" as it is found in Isaiah 43:10:

The Hebrew word for WITNESS comes from the verb which means "to say again and again." In Isaiah 43:10 the noun means "a testimony, proof, witness, one who strengthens or confirms the saying of another." (unpublished Sunday School notes, The Middletown Bible Church)

A **witness**, in light of this definition, is one who *constantly strengthens and confirms the saying of another*. Israel, as God's witness, was to strengthen and confirm the saying of God Himself. What was this saying of God? What were the words of the LORD that Israel was to strengthen and confirm? To determine this we must examine Isaiah 43:10-11:

"Ye are my **witnesses**...that ye may...understand that I am He..."

The LORD now declares WHO HE IS:

"before Me no god was formed, neither will there be after Me" (verse 11).

The LORD was simply saying, "I am the ONLY GOD." It was this saying that Israel was to strengthen and confirm. Because they were **witnesses** they were to draw attention to the fact that the LORD was the only God. In Isaiah 43:11 the LORD tells us more concerning WHO HE IS:

"I, I (pronoun repeated for emphasis) am the LORD and there is no one who saves apart from Me."

The declaration here made is that there is no Saviour apart from Jehovah. The LORD is simply saying: "I am the only Saviour." God's **witnesses** must be constantly strengthening and confirming the glorious truth that *the LORD is the only God and the only Saviour!*

Isaiah 43:12 gives us another declaration of the LORD which must be strengthened and confirmed by His **witnesses**:

"I (emphatic, emphasis on God) have declared (told; compare Isaiah 46:10), and have saved, and I have showed (literally, "caused to hear"), when there was not with you a strange god: and ye are My witnesses, declares the LORD, that I am God."

Israel was to strengthen and confirm the simple but awesome saying of the LORD: "I AM GOD." God's **witnesses** must point to that fact! They must draw attention to the living God. By life and by lips God's witnesses declare that HE IS GOD AND HE IS THE ONLY GOD!

Isaiah 43:13 continues to enlighten us as to who God is. We learn that He is the eternal God who not only saves, but also keeps! Whatever God does, it shall be done forever:

"Furthermore, from the day [from eternity] I am He, and there is no one who can snatch away [deliver, rescue] from My hand (cf. John 10:28-29); I will do it and who will reverse it [literally-'bring it back']?"

Another passage should also be considered in light of this discussion. In Isaiah 44:6-8 Israel is again declared to be God's **witnesses**:

"Thus saith the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts. I am the first and I am the last and there is no God apart from Me. And who is like Me, let him proclaim (call) and let him declare it and let him set it in order for Me from My appointing (setting) the people of old and let them declare the things that are coming and that will come. Don't dread and don't fear, have I not caused you to hear from that time and have I not declared? And ye are My witnesses. Is there a God or a Rock apart from Me? I know of none."

In this passage the emphasis is again upon all that God is. God's **witnesses** are to understand who He is: the King, the Redeemer, the Rock, the First and the Last, the One who declares the end from the beginning (compare Isaiah 46:10), the unique God! Is there any God apart from Him? The omniscient LORD Himself answers: "I KNOW OF NONE!" A **witness** is one who

draws attention to this Great God!

F. The Mechanics of Being a Witness.

How could Israel, a sinful nation, draw attention to the Living God? How could these people possibly strengthen and confirm the fact that Jehovah was the only God and the only Saviour? What dynamic did they possess which enabled them to be **witnesses** unto God?

At this point we must remember the purpose of a **witness**. Israel was created in order to bring glory to God's Name (Isaiah 43:7, 21). To this end they were to **1) know** and be acquainted with God; **2) believe** and rely and rest their all upon God; and **3) be growing in a deepening understanding** of who God is (ISAIAH 43:10). When these three purposes were accomplished in the lives of God's people it was then that they could be faithful **witnesses** unto the LORD.

Pastor Carlton Helgerson has suggested a definition of a witness which well summarizes all that has been said to this point. This simple yet profound statement is as follows:

A witness is one who causes others to think about God! This was exactly Israel's function among the nations. Because the children of Israel knew and understood God and because they believed God and relied upon His Word, they were **WITNESSES**. As the nations round about them observed these people they were forced to think about God. As long as Israel functioned in harmony with God's Word the nations could not forget about God. This is the function of a **witness**. He reminds people about God! He causes others to think about God. By his relationship and walk with the LORD, the godly Jew was constantly confirming this message: "There is a LIVING GOD and He is the only God and the only Saviour!" His very life drew attention to his God and the LORD was magnified and glorified in him.

G. Summary.

A **witness**, therefore, is one who has a personal knowledge of God. He is that person who draws attention to the LORD Himself. The purpose of a **witness** is to know God, to believe and rely upon Him, and to understand who He is. Furthermore, a **witness** is one who strengthens and confirms what God has said: "I am the only God and the only Saviour." By his life and relationship to the LORD a **witness causes others to think about God**.

III. SIGNIFICANCE FOR US.

A. Acts 1:8

"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me [literally-'My witnesses'] both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

This passage is of utmost significance to us as believers in the church age. As a nation, Israel failed as God's **witnesses**. As a result the nation was temporarily laid aside (Romans 9-11) and God is presently visiting the nations of the world and taking out of them a people for His Name

(Acts 15:14). The Lord Jesus declared in Acts 1:8 that the church was now going to be His **witness** (the church is made up of those who have been baptized into Christ's body and indwelt by Christ's Spirit). This indicates a change of *program* but it did not indicate a change of *purpose*. No longer would God's **witness** be a nation. Instead, God's **witness** (the church) would be among all nations. Jerusalem, instead of being the *center point* as it was during the old program, would now merely be the *starting point* of the new program (see Luke 24:47 "beginning at Jerusalem"). Instead of God's **witnesses** being surrounded by all nations (as in the old program), God's **witnesses** would now be "among all nations" (Luke 24:47– God's new program). And yet, in spite of these changes in God's PROGRAM (from Israel to the church), the purpose of *what a witness is* had not changed!

The expression "ye shall be My **witnesses**" (Acts 1:8) is quite similar to the passages we have looked at in Isaiah (compare Isaiah 43:10,12; 44:8). It is very possible that when the Lord spoke these words immediately before His ascension, His disciples may have recalled these "witness" passages from Isaiah. Those to whom our Lord spoke were all Jews and they were certainly acquainted with these passages from their Old Testament Scriptures.

There is no indication that the Lord used the term "**witnesses**" in a way contrary to Old Testament usage. True, there was now to be a difference of locality. For the first time God's **witnesses** would be dispersed throughout the earth. But as they went, they were still God's **witnesses**. [Note: When Israel was dispersed throughout the earth it was because of disobedience. The church goes into all the world in obedience to the Lord's great commission.] Their purpose had not changed. They were to draw attention to the Risen Lord and they were to strengthen and confirm the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was the only God and the only Saviour (Isaiah 43:10-11; compare Acts 4:12). As they went forth into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit, *people would be forced to think about God*.

B. Wrong Emphasis.

Generally, when we think of a **witness** we reflect upon what a **witness** does, where a **witness** goes and what a **witness** says. The burden of this study is to put the emphasis on what a **witness** *is*. When we fail to understand this we have nothing. If a person *is* God's witness then he certainly will do certain things, go various places and say the right things (compare what the eye and ear witnesses said in Acts 4:20 –"For we cannot but speak the things which we have **seen** and **heard**"). The problem is that many believers are running around getting involved in certain programs and activities without ever stopping to realize what we are supposed to *be* in the first place. The time has come to be still before the Lord (Psalm 46:10) and find out the reason and purpose behind all of our activities and all of our service.

To the average believer, Acts 1:8 means that we should go out witnessing to others about the Lord. The verb idea (WITNESSING – *doing* something) rather than the noun idea (WITNESS – *being* something) is usually stressed. Therefore the verse is conceptualized as follows: "Ye *shall witness* unto Me." This is not what the Lord said. He declared, "Ye shall *be* My **witnesses**." The emphasis is not upon *witnessing* but upon *being a witness*. (*We do* because of what we *are*). This

was also true in Isaiah 43:10: "Ye *are* my **witnesses**." A person who *is* a faithful **witness** will certainly "witness." He will draw attention to the Lord by life and by lips. Many sincere believers are running around in the energy of the flesh doing what they call "witnessing." The tragedy is that often they have no concept of what a witness really is. They try to GO and GLOW before they KNOW. They try to properly BEHAVE when first they need to properly BELIEVE. They endeavor to UNDERTAKE before they UNDERSTAND.

It is profitable to call our attention once again to Isaiah 43:10. This verse does not put the emphasis on **going** and **doing** and **speaking**, but on **knowing**, **believing** and **understanding**! Oh that we might put the emphasis where God does!

C. Two Biblical Illustrations.

1. The Sending Forth of the Disciples (Mark 3:14).

Our Lord ordained twelve men. For what purpose? "**That they should be with Him.**" These men certainly would have failed miserably had they been thrust out on a mission immediately. It was needful that they should know Christ and spend time with Him. They needed to learn to trust Him and to understand who He was. Only then would they be ready to go forth and preach (Mark 3:14). As servants of the Lord we do well to heed this example. The time has come to re-examine our priorities and follow the Biblical order. When the disciples finally did go forth to preach, it is very interesting what people noticed about them: "and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). If you are going to serve Him, then you must be WITH HIM! You must *learn from Him* (let Him be your Teacher) and you must *learn of Him* (let Him be your Subject matter). Service must flow out of a personal relationship with Christ.

2. Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42).

In this instructive account we learn that Martha was over occupied with much serving. Oh how busy she was in her service for the Lord, running around and doing this and that! Mary on the other hand, sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus, listening to Him speak. She quietly remained there seeking to become better acquainted with her Guest. She was building a sweet relationship and fellowship with Him. Martha, however, had no time for this. She was accomplishing so many things for the Lord. Wouldn't the Lord be pleased with all of her activity?

"And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Notice the following contrasts:

Martha was *servicing*; Mary was *sitting*.

Martha was *worrying*; Mary was *worshipping*.

Martha was *hurrying*; Mary was *hearing*.

Martha was busy with the *work*; Mary was attentive to the *Word*.

Martha was troubled about *many things*; Mary was concerned about *one thing*.

Martha was trying to *undertake*; Mary was trying to *understand*.

Martha was *over occupied*; Mary was *occupied with Christ*.

Martha was *laboring*; Mary was *learning* and *loving*.

Martha was *energetic*; Mary was *enjoying* the Lord.

Martha was *busy* and *bothered*; Mary was *blessed*.

Sometimes we get so busy serving the Lord that we forget the Lord we are serving! May it not be so!

D. The Verbal Witness and the Gospel Responsibility.

Our Great Saviour has redeemed us with His precious blood, brought us up out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay and has set our feet upon a Rock! He has put a song in our mouths of praise unto our God. As a result many shall *see* and *fear* and *trust* in the LORD (see Psalm 40:1-3).

It is interesting to note that it is impossible to see a song! The Psalmist did not say: "Many shall hear" but rather, "Many shall see." That which is seen is a changed and changing life! Our words and our songs mean nothing unless they are backed up by a life that is devoted to Christ. A true and faithful **witness** speaks not by words alone, but by life and words.

It is also instructive to read 1 Peter 3:15 and Colossians 4:6. Notice that these verses do not say "SPEAK" but "ANSWER." The implication is that the unsaved person is asking a question! ***Our life should provoke questions and our lips should supply answers.*** Before I can witness I must *be a Witness*.

God has given us a tongue and a mouth and we are to use these for His glory. We have been given the privilege of proclaiming the most glorious message that has ever reached the human ear. As His personal ambassadors we have been given the message of the Living God: "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). And yet, the moment we stop preaching with our lives, our words become as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

It is not the purpose of this discussion to in any way minimize the responsibility we have to preach the gospel. The burden of this study, however, is to lay stress upon the foundation from which all service must flow. Out of resting in the Lord flows service for the Lord. When God's people lay hold on the Biblical concept of what a **witness** is, it is certain that believers will not be lax in gospel outreach and missions programs will not suffer. Rather the savour of God will be manifest in all places unto the glory and praise of God (2 Cor. 2:14).

IV. CONCLUSION.

Early in this study we mentioned that a false witness is an abomination to the Lord. How we need to examine ourselves to see if we have been faithful and true **witnesses**! Do our lives draw attention to the Saviour? Are we reckoning ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11)? As others view our lives do they think about God? If not, the time has come to exercise ourselves unto godliness. Do our lives strengthen and confirm the fact that there is a Living God? Is our emphasis upon knowing and understanding God for WHO HE IS? Do we rely upon Him and take Him at His Word moment by moment? Oh may we be sensitive to the will and desire of our Saviour:

"You are My witnesses. You have the privilege and responsibility of representing Me, the Living God. When people look at you and come close to you, they will be forced to think about Me. They will know that I am the Lord. You are my witnesses, that you may know and believe and understand that I am He. I am the only God and the only Saviour. You are My witnesses that I am God."

May God make us such witnesses by His grace! As we draw attention to Him may He receive all the glory!

"May His beauty rest upon me
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him."

—Kate B. Wilkinson

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—George Zeller, April 1973 (revised 1/89,10/00)

Character Before Career

The motto for a school on Long Island, New York is this: *Character Before Career*. This excellent motto gives pause for thought. What the Christian is, is more important than anything

he may say or do. Of course we are saved so that we may bear witness to others concerning Christ, and we ought not fail in this responsibility, but above all we are redeemed in order that we may have communion with God, and He with us. The heart must be in right relationship with Him if we are to serve Him acceptably. He longs for our love and worship more than He does for our service. Christian character, unsullied and adorning intimacy with the Lord, is of first importance. Words and deeds that bring glory to God are the fruit of such a relationship. The Christian life comes first. Christian deeds follow. Character before career! – E. Schuyler English

Your Christian Testimony

I thank you for the way you live, your testimony clear,
For even when you do not speak, your Christian life I hear.
You radiate Christ's love and peace, His joy shines in your face.
To meet you is to know you have possession of His grace.
I know your trials are not few, your problems are not small,
But with each one your faith does grow with victory through them all.
You do encourage everyone who knows and talks with you;
For living, not you speaking, is your testimony true.

– Mrs. Maxine Clark

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