

## Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Winsome Witnesses: The Power of Personal Testimony – 4-10 July 2020

**C**hrist would have us give witness that “God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God” {8T 268.3}, even when theologians in our Church are opposed to this saving truth, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Act 4:20). When Peter and John “preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead,” they were acting contrary to the will of the majority. The popular religion was utterly opposed to the doctrine which they taught, yet they persisted in their course even after being threatened and warned not to do so. Their reply to the religious leaders was this: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Let us today follow their good example.

**Sunday: Unlikely Witnesses** – We read of the demoniac in Luke 5:15-20. After Jesus freed him from demons, the former demoniac asked if he could follow Jesus, but Jesus told him to go home and witness to his friends. It would certainly have been more pleasant for the restored man to have remained with Christ; but great blessings bring great obligations. As Christ had released him from the bondage of Satan he became Christ’s servant, and it was therefore his duty to do Christ’s work. Jesus told him to “go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and bath had compassion on thee.” This he cheerfully did, and the result was that those who would not accept Jesus in person because they did not know Him, listened with wonder as He was lifted up in the life and testimony of the restored demoniac. There is no testimony so powerful as that which comes from a heart which has been cleansed from sin by the power of Christ. Let us always ever remember, as taught by the unlikely witness, that Christ calls us and cleanses us for service.

**Monday: Proclaiming the Risen Christ** – We read in Matthew 28:8-20 the account of the women who witnessed that Jesus had risen from the dead. They proclaimed the risen Christ. The experience of the two women in meeting Jesus, and the instruction which He gave to them are full of Gospel teaching. “Jesus met them.” They had come “to see the sepulchre,” expecting to find their Lord in a tomb. Still it was their love for Jesus which brought them there, and the angel had said to them, “I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.” But instead of finding a dead Saviour in Joseph’s tomb, the living Saviour met them. Although their faith had not taken in the fact of His resurrection, yet in response to their thought of Him, such as it was, “Jesus met them.” And so it is with us. To the often feebleness of our thought of Him, He responds with a mightiness of His grace. Though we may sometimes speak and act as though the Saviour was dead, yet even then He reveals Himself to us as the living Saviour, “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or a think.” And the living Jesus, who met them, said, “Go tell.” Having seen for themselves that He was not in the tomb, and having heard from the angel “He is risen,” and having themselves seen Him alive, they were to make known these things to others. Thus does the Lord use us as instrumentalities to make known to others the glad news concerning Himself.

**Tuesday: Changed Lives Make a Difference** – In Acts the fourth chapter, the rulers were astonished at the power and knowledge of the humble fishermen preachers, as they had been with Jesus. We are told that when the rulers “saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The word “ignorant” is unfortunate, as it is applied to the apostles. “Unlearned” they certainly were, according to the fine standards of the theological schools; but they were certainly not ignorant. The two words “ignorant men,” in Acts 4:13, are from one Greek word, *idiotai*, the plural of *idiots*. The reader will at once recognise in this our common word ‘idiot,’ and will at once conclude that the English rendering is much more mild than the Greek text. But wait a moment. The primary and ordinary meaning of this Greek word is, ‘a private person,’ one of the common people. But as certain public teachers began to style them-selves philosophers, and to claim for themselves a monopoly of wisdom, so that a man must have a recommendation from them – a certificate that he had ‘been through’ the prescribed course – before he could have any standing as a scholar, it came about that all who had not such public recognition

were considered ignorant men. The fact that our translators adopted this secondary use of the Greek word instead of its real meaning shows how much they were under the influence of the same spirit. The Danish and Norwegian versions have 'laymen' in the place of "ignorant men," and the German has 'men of inferior condition.' The encouragement is that people in the most humble and despised walks of life may, by devoted study of the Word from a sincere desire that will astonish even the worldly-wise (Deut. 4:5-6; Proverbs 2:1-9). The lesson is that in the church of Christ, there are no ranks and no degrees – no class distinctions. The church, following in the steps of the schoolmen of heathen times, have made two classes, – clergy and laity, – that is the special, elect class, who have the keys of knowledge, and *the people*, who are to take what the clergy are pleased to dole out to them. The Scriptures teach us that all in the primitive true church, were *laymen*, that is, they were ordinary people, whose only distinction from others was that which Christ performed in them.

**Wednesday: Sharing Our Experience** – Paul was able to share his experience because Christ was in him. "When it pleased God ... to reveal His Son in me" (Galatians 1:15-16); note the exact words – the apostle does not say that it pleased God to reveal His Son *to* him but *in* Him. There is a great truth in this, which stands out very plainly in connection with some other texts. Read the whole of Deuteronomy 30. There we see that two things were placed before the people for them to choose between, namely, life and good, and death and evil. This, together with the fact that they were exhorted to keep the commandments of God, shows that they had not yet attained to righteousness. Then in verses 11-14 we read that the commandment is not far off so as to make it necessary for some one to bring it to them, in order that they might do it; "but *the Word* is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and *in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.*" We see, therefore, that the Word is in the hearts of men before they do it, and that it is there in order that they may do it. But what is the Word?

We read in John 1:1-14, where we learn that the Divine "Word was made flesh." That this is what is meant in the passage just quoted in Deuteronomy is seen from Romans 10:6-9, where it is quoted, and the Word is plainly declared to be Christ. Christ dwells in the heart, in the flesh, of every believer, and has come thus near to all men in order that they may be made the righteousness of God. Most men are ignorant of this divine presence, and live as though God were not, and that they were their own creators and preservers. But when the Spirit of truth brings a man to the knowledge of the truth, then Christ dwells in his heart "*by faith*" (Ephesians 3:17). Then is Christ *revealed in him*, and he fulfils the divine purpose of showing "forth the excellencies of Him that called him out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Only by such a revelation of Christ in a man can he preach Him among the heathen with that revelation, his whole life is a Gospel sermon, even though he does not utter discourses. On this wise, the work of the human preacher is exactly the same as that of the heavens: to declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-5), to be done in the same manner.

**Thursday: The Power of a Personal Testimony** – In Acts 24:25, Felix had sent for the apostle, that he might hear and pronounce judgment upon his cause; but suddenly he found himself at the bar of judgment instead of Paul; and as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." He saw a change demanded in his own life if he would be prepared for the issues of the future; but he said to himself, Not to-day. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Though Paul remained a prisoner in his charge for two years, there is no record of his having found that "convenient time," when he sent for the apostle and heard further "concerning the faith in Christ." To unrenewed heart, the future is always more convenient time for attending to the interests of the soul, than the present. This is always a suggestion of the devil. When Paul stood before Agrippa, to answer for his faith, he briefly stated the chief experiences of his life, and then preached Christ and Him crucified, expounding on the hope we should have in Christ. Paul's use of Scripture, for which Agrippa as a Jew could not deny, did put Agrippa in a position where he could have accepted Jesus as the Messiah. His reply shows that he rejected Christ: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29). Like governor Felix, many opt for a convenient time; like governor Agrippa, many are almost persuaded.