

ACTS 5

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - NAPLES, FLORIDA

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What a joy it is to be in the house of the Lord this morning - to have this opportunity to worship in spirit and in truth. The Bible tells us - "Where two or three come together that Jesus Christ is there in the midst."

We have already felt His presence and His joy and His Spirit with us through this wonderful music program today.

I count it a real honor and privilege to have the opportunity to share with you in this pulpit this morning. I know that most of you came expecting your pastor to preach and when you have a new minister you are not sure just what to expect.

My wife and I were down here on vacation this week and we were in a pastors' conference Monday and Tuesday and met your pastor there and we were to get together for lunch and then where we were staying - I got a note to say that it was urgent that I call him. Anytime I get a note that says - Urgent - I always call him and the urgency was he asked me to fill his pulpit today for the reason you heard earlier today.

And we - coming down - I don't know why it is - but we were packing and usually when I come to Naples and we've been coming down here for several years for vacation time - I very seldom ever put in a tie or a sport jacket - once in a while.

I said to Carmelita - I think I'll take a dress shirt and a tie and perhaps I'll need it. Little did I know that this would be

the way I would use it. So what you see is what you get. That's all I got and you'll just have to deal with that the best way you can.

I know when you have a speaker you have never heard before a lot of things go through your mind and you start thinking about different aspects of what it is going to be like.

One of the first things you always think about -- Is he going to be long-winded or is he going to be short-winded? Most of you are hoping for the best. Some of you have already moved into your long-winded positions I can see that already.

JOKE

I'm kind of reminded of the lady who had her little boy in church one Sunday and he was creating all kinds of disturbances because he was bored.

So she was pointing out things in the sanctuary to avert his boredom. She pointed him to the stained glass windows and pointed him to the lights in the church, the chandeliers, and pointed him to the organ and its pipes and he just kept moving on.

Finally he spied three flags up on the chancellor. He said, "Mother what are those three flags for?" She said, "Son, that flag on the left is the Christian flag. The flag in the center is the American flag. That flag on the right is in honor of the boys who died in the service."

He said, "In which service did they die, the morning or the evening service?"

##

Hopefully we can survive this without any deaths and make it without any problems.

I guess the second thing you wonder is - What is he going to talk about and will it be worth hearing if he does talk about it?

I started something having been the pastor of this congregation in Atlanta - having been there thirty-three years - we are in our thirty-fourth year now - I went there in 1960 - I was ten and my wife was nine at that time, but you wonder about it.

I started a practice that I wished I had never started. We started putting sermon titles in the sermon every week which is a serious mistake. We have to get them in -- we have five locations and we have one printing department that handles those five locations and have to get them in now by Tuesday morning and who knows what you are going to preach on by Tuesday. Usually any resemblance to what is in the bulletin and what I preach is purely coincidental anyway. But we do run them.

ILLUSTRATION

In bulletins you get some interesting sermon titles and closing hymns put together.

For instance one pastor one Sunday morning was going to preach on gossip so the sermon title was listed - "Gossip." The closing hymn was listed - "I love to tell the story."

Another one that he had - he was going to preach on Samson so the sermon was listed - "Samson in the lap of Dallilah" and the closing sermons was listed - "Leave it There."

The one I like the best is - The pastor was going to be very dramatic and preach on hell so he listed as his sermon title, "What Hell Is Really Like." In parenthesis right under the title it said, ("Come early and enjoy pre-service fellowship.")

##

I do have a title this morning. I would like to talk with you a little while about dimensions of discipleship. The dimensions of discipleship.

If you have your Bibles turn with me please to Acts chapter 5 verse 42. One verse of scripture today in Acts chapter 5 verse 22.

I will give you a moment to find it. Acts chapter 5 verse 42.

The King James Version says -

And daily in the temple and in every house
they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus
Christ.

(Repeat)

Shall we pray?

PRAYER

Perhaps the most important question we could ask ourselves today is "How can a First Century Christ speak to a Twentieth Century World."

ILLUSTRATION

How can a man who lived in a day when a tent was a castle and a camel was a touring car have anything to say to this day of the Lexus and the Mercedes and the Cadillac. How can a man who walked through the wheat field and plucked grain with his hands have anything to say to this day of the tractor and the combine and the reaper? How can a man who stooped down and wrote in the sand have anything to say to this day of the television set, the computer and the FAX machine and to all kinds of copying machines? How can a man who read from the scroll in the synagogue have anything to say to this day of the public library, the paperback and microfilm? How can the man who rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey have anything to say to this day of the Supersonic Jet, the Space Shuttle and the man on the moon? How can the man who wore a seamless robe have anything to say to the day of the bikini bathing suit, blue jeans and the continental cut?

##

Well, the truth of the matter is, the way we answer that question determines our attitudes, our beliefs and our values. It

determines our character, our temperament and our mood. It determines our relationships, our behavior and our lifestyle.

For in reality if we claim ourselves to be children of God and called by Him to do His work then it means that we have been called to do just that -- to translate a First Century Christ into a Twentieth Century world.

This is the meaning of Matthew 28:18 when Christ said -

All power is given to me in heaven and earth.

The implication is that He transfers that power to us and says -

Go into all the world and make disciples of every nation baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them everything that I have taught you and lo or surely or behold I am with you even unto the end of the world.

The question then becomes - How do we become those translators? That brings up the whole question of discipleship and we have to ask ourselves - What is a disciple? It is my feeling today that God is not just calling us to be Christian. The word Christian has become a very watered down word.

Anyone can become a Christian and most people that you ask - Are you a Christian? They say - Sure I am a Christian, I am not a heathen; I am not a pagan; I am not a Buddhist; I am not of the Islamic faith. Therefore, I must be a Christian.

But it is interesting that the Bible only uses the word Christian three times. It uses the word disciple over 300 times.

And in a world that is post-Christian and in an age when we are beyond the Christian era and we find ourselves living in a secularized society, it is an imperative that we understand what it means to become disciples.

As Carl F. H. Henry say in His book The Twilight of a Great Civilization, we are in the post-Christian era - "the Barbarians have come and have taken control."

Chuck Colson a man whom you know well made the statement in an article I read in (?) magazine not long ago that - "It is impossible to build the city of man without the city of God."

For thirty years we have been secularizing America trying to build the city of man without the city of God. And we are paying a very dear price.

In the past thirty years violent crime has increased 500%. In the past thirty years divorce is up 400%. In the last thirty years illegitimate births are up 400%. In the last thirty years child abuse is up 300%. In the last thirty years teenage suicide is up 200%.

Over a million and a half babies are aborted every year and over a hundred million people in the world suffer from AIDS and over a million in the United States.

In the midst of all of that we are called to be disciples.

The question then is - What is a disciple and who is a disciple? If we use the Greek Word for discipleship out of the New Testament which is amathetes it means to be a follower or learner of Jesus Christ.

As we observe the etymological development of the word we find out that it came to mean those who really accepted Christ as Messiah, those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord, those who strive with all of their hearts to subdue and conquer the flesh and to live by the Spirit.

But when we really look into the Bible and we start to look at discipleship we understand that it means to live a new direction, to march by a different drum beat, to be led by a different trumpet call.

The Bible talks about not just "talking the talk" but learning how to "walk the walk."

In Romans 6 and 4 it tells us "To walk in the newness of life."

Second Corinthians 5 and 7 - it tells us - "To walk by faith and not by sight."

In Galatians 5 and 16 it tells us to -

Walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

In Ephesians 4 and 1 - it says - "To walk worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way."

In Ephesians 5 and 2 - it tells us - "To walk in love even as Christ loved us."

In Ephesians 5 and 15 - it says - "To walk circumspectly, cautiously as wise and not as unwise."

When the Bible talks about living the life of discipleship it talks about a new dynamic kind of life. I do not think for a moment that God wants us to live in depression or that He wants us

to live in fear or that He wants us to live in disappointment or disillusionment or He wants us to get caught up in all of the deeds of the flesh of the world today.

God said - I am offering to you a dynamic life.

When the Bible talks about discipleship it talks about it in terms of a radiant life.

In John 1:4 as we disciples we are told that -

In Him was life and the life was the light of men.

As disciples we are to live the abundant life in John 10:10 -

I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.

As disciples we are to live the eternal life.

In John 11:25 -

I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live.

The Bible talks about it terms of a Christ-like life.

In Philippians 1:21 Christ says -

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

When the Bible talks about an overcoming life - In the midst of all circumstances, situations or problems.

Revelation chapter 21 verse 7 - we hear the Revelator say -

To him that overcometh he shall inherit all things and I will be His God and he will be my child.

Well if we are really honest all of us today would like to say - Sure I would like to have a radiant life. I would like to have an abundant life. I would like to have an eternal life. I would like to know that I could live a Christ-like life. I would like to know that would like to know that I could live an overcoming life in the midst of all the circumstances of life. But how do we do that? There is so much confusion. There is so much frustration. There is so much difficulty in the world today and sometimes I don't know whether I'm coming in or going out or what is going on in my life.

JOKE

It kind of reminds me of the Manhattan businessman who used to have to catch the Staten Island Ferry each day and if he missed the 5:00 Ferry, he didn't get another one until 7:00. That meant he didn't get home till 9 or 10:00 at night. So it was always a hassle everyday to catch the 5:00 Ferry. One Friday he jammed everything in the brief case, caught the elevator down from his high rise business office, jumped in a cab, got down to the docks, looked out on the corner of the ramp and the Ferry boat he was to catch was about 10 feet out in the water.

Took a run around the ramp, jumped across the water and just grabbed a hold of the Ferry boat and pulled himself up, started up the steps to go to the upper deck. There was a man standing on the top of the steps that had watched the whole scenario. The commuter looked at him and wiped his brow of sweat and said, "Shew - I just barely made it."

The bystander said, "Yes, I know but this boat is coming in."

##

Isn't that the way you feel sometimes -- like you are on an out boat coming in when you want to be on an out boat going out and you get caught in it.

There is so much in this computerized, technological secularized, materialized society today that sometimes we think we are no more than a number. We think we are no more than a machine.

JOKE

It's kind of like the man who was waiting on a bus and he was getting kind of bored and so he went over to a weight machine, a scale.

He put in a quarter and he got out a little card that said, Your name is John Jones. You weigh 175 pounds and you are waiting on a bus.

He said, there is no machine in the world that is that smart. But there is no machine that is that brilliant - taking the place of human beings.

So he put in another quarter and got back the card. It said, Your name is John Jones, you weigh 175 pounds and you are waiting on a bus.

He said, That is impossible, I'll show that machine. He went down the street, crossed the street - went into a novelty shop and he bought a wig. He bought a mask. He turned up his coat collar and came back, went across the street, put the quarter in the machine and got back the little card that said, Your name is John

Jones. You weigh 175 pounds and while you were messing around down the street you missed your bus.

##

Tucked away in Acts chapter 5 verse 42 there is a little formula - a formula for discipleship.

And daily in the temple and in every house
they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus
Christ.

What does that really say to us and what are the dimensions that we can find in that one little verse?

First of all when I think of discipleship I have to see it as a dedication dimension. These early Christians, these First Century Christians, the Church that brought it all into being after the coming of Pentecost and the filling of the Holy Spirit, they had a dedication dimension - Daily. For them it was a twenty-four hour lifestyle. It was more than just Sunday morning or Sunday evening or Wednesday or some more kinds of activities through ten week. It was a lifestyle with them. It was a twenty-four hour per day proposition.

They learned what it meant to live by Deuteronomy 6 and 5 -
You shall love the Lord your God with all your
heart, your soul, your mind and your strength.

They learned to live by Psalm 119 verse 2 -

Blessed is that person who keeps the statutes of the Lord and seeks from Him with all of his heart.

They learned to live by Proverbs 3 and 5 -

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths.

They learned what it really meant to live by Romans chapter 12 verse 1 and 2 - even though it hadn't yet been written they already had put it in effect -

I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that you might prove what is good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

They were dedicated.

I used to have the opportunity and have many times in the last ten years of preaching in England. One of the great highlights of my life was when I preached twenty-nine times there in thirty-one days and a different place every night with the exception of two

places that we had three-night crusades, the rest were one-night crusades.

The churches there had organized and had opened up some of the old Wesleyan churches that had not been preached in for sixty, seventy and one or two of them over a hundred years.

They cleaned them up and got them presentable, worked hard - filled the churches up everywhere that we went. In those twenty-nine sermons in thirty-one days we were privileged to see over a thousand people make first-time commitments to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a marvelous time for me, but I think the highlight was when I had the opportunity to preach in Trefalgar Square which is where John Wesley used to preach. He used to have open air) meetings there had people would gather by the hundreds to hear him expound the scriptures.

ILLUSTRATION

The story is told of John Wesley that he was preaching there one day and a band of young gang members had come to break up the meeting and they were creating disturbance but he never stopped preaching. The leader of the gang got enthralled after a bit about what he was saying and got caught up in the inspiration and the anointing that was on his countenance. The gang leader looked over to one of his gang members and said - He ain't a man. He ain't a man.

The message was completed. An altar call was given. One of the first persons to respond to the altar invitation was the gang leader. Several of the gang members went with him. They prayed

the sinner's prayer and they found Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives and in that instantaneous thing that we call "the new birth."

The gang leader went up to John Wesley and touched him on the hair and touched him on the shoulders and took him by the hand and looked over at one of the other gang members and said - He is a man. He is a man. He is a man like God.

##

We are not going to solve our crime problems, and we are not going to solve our moral problems, and we are not going to solve our political problems and we are not going to solve our pollution problems and we are not going to solve our children problems until we learn one basic thing - Second Chronicles chapter 7:14 -

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then will I turn from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land.

There was a lowly Nazarean that walked through ten valleys and the shadows of this world.

In John 13 and 15 he said -

I have given you an example you should do unto others as I have done unto you.

The Apostle Peter tells us in First Peter chapter 2 verse 21 - Christ left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

The Apostle John tells us in First John 2:6 -

He that saith he abideth in Him ought also to
walk even as He walked.

But there is a second dimension here - it is not only a dedication dimension but there is a dimension of devotion. "Daily in the temple and in every house" - these people went to church. But they went to church in the temple area and in their homes. The first church buildings did not come into being until the Second Century. When we begin to see them they would go into the temple area - if you have ever been to Jerusalem - on the temple mount - and they would gather in little groups at certain places around the temple area. They would sing the songs and they would sing the hymns and they would share their testimony. People would stand around and listen to them and by the very virtue of sharing what Christ had done in their lives others came to know Him. It was a time of revival

In the temple and in every house they cease
not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

In Acts chapter 42 it tells us they were devoted; they were committed; they were devoted to what? They were devoted to the Apostles teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. Marvelous things happened. They were all filled with awe and many wonderful signs and miraculous happenings were performed by the hands of the disciples and by the Apostles and the Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved.

They were devoted. They went to church.

I'm not really sure we understand the full implication of the Church. We have been privileged to live in a great challenging day when we have seen a lot of denominational lines erased. The very fact that you are having me in your pulpit here today is an understanding that there is a transcendent quality that goes beyond our denominational differences.

We build the denominations; we build the institutions; we build the organizations. But the Church the Bible talks about is more than a denomination. It is more than an institution. It is more than an organization.

I have so many committees in my church I have to have a committee to look after the committee. If we are going to get to heaven by a committee then all of us will make it there is no doubt about it.

But the church has to be more than that. There is a transcendent quality that when we come together regardless of what our denominational rearing or preference may be - if Jesus Christ is there then we know that we are in the right place because He is Lord.

When we look at the Bible it tells us what a Church really is. What is a Church? You look at the book of Ephesians - Ephesians chapter 1 -

It says chapter 1 tells us that the Church is the body of Christ. In Ephesians chapter 2 it is the temple of Christ. In Ephesians chapter 3 it is the revelation of Christ. In Ephesians chapter 4 it is the new humanity of Christ. In Ephesians chapter

5 it is the bride of Christ. In Ephesians chapter 6 it is the army of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you extrapolate the Greek words out of the New Testament that really mean the Church you get some interesting figures.

There is ten Greek word ecclesia, which means those who are called out of the world into fellowship with Christ. The Greek word laos, the people of God. The Greek word liturgia, the work of the people of God. The Greek word koinoinia, which means the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word meseo, which means those who are sent into the world to proclaim - Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

So who is the Church? It is a "who" and not a "what." The Church is made up of people. We build the buildings. We build the organizations. We build the institutions. God builds the people. Who we are - that is what the Church is. Where we go - that is where the Church goes. What we do - that is what the Church does. How we act - that is how the Church acts. Our relationships - those are the churches relationship. Therefore, the Church is made up of those who are called out of the world into fellowship with Christ to become the people of God to do the work of the people of God as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to go back into the world to proclaim - Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

I have been asked on many occasions - What will be the next revival? Our church and our congregation is a product of the charismatic movement. We have seen the Lord work in a marvelous and mighty way as you have here. And as we have seen all through

the country in that great wave - some good - some bad - some indifferent - but it moved in a mighty way. What will be the next revival? I think the next revival will be a marketplace revival. When every born again believer really takes his belief system seriously and becomes anointed of the Holy Spirit to do the work in this world that he is called to do so that we can truly be translators of the Word.

Luke 11:28 says -

Blessed is that person that not only hears the Word but obeys that Word.

What I am learning in my thirty-three years with my congregation -- when I start thinking about being with the same congregation now thirty-fourth year now - I get to feeling really old.

We have two grandchildren now and sometimes I feel old.

JOKE

Sometimes I feel like the grandfather that had his little granddaughter on his lap and was telling her stories. She got a little quite after a bit and looked up to him and touched his grey hair and touched his wrinkled face and touched his gnarled hands and looked at him and said - "Grandfather - were you with Noah on the Ark?"

Well that kind of set the old man back and he thought for a minute and he said "Of course not, granddaughter I wasn't with Noah on the Ark."

She thought for a moment and said - "Well grandfather; if you weren't with Noah on the Ark how come you didn't drown?"

##

You just came out of Sunday school many of you - I mean -

ILLUSTRATION

One Sunday morning we have five locations and we have twelve services on Sunday - and I was preaching - I rotate between Central and North most of the time - and the other locations on occasion. One Sunday morning I was shaking hands with people after the eleven o'clock service at our Central location and an elderly lady came up to me.

An elderly lady came walking down the aisle and threw her arms around my neck and kissed my cheek. I was glad she was in her eighties.

I said, "My you look happy today." She said, "I am." She said, "Did you know you had angels in this church?" I said, "Well, no, I did not know that we had angels. I have run into one or two devils from time to time... "

She said, "Well you have got angels in this church." I said, "What do you mean we have angels in this church?" She reached back and took a lady in her middle thirties by the hand and pulled her up to where she was standing and said "Here is one; this lady is an angel."

I asked, "Why do you say she is an angel?" She said, "About a year ago, I came down with a terrible stroke. I was paralyzed from the waste down and I couldn't talk. I was just alive - fairly

alert but I was just living. The doctors said that I would be dead within six months.

But my family said, "No, we are not going to do that. If she is going to die, we are going to bring her home." So they took me home and they hired this member of your church who was a nurse to come and be my nurse. She came to be my nurse and I could not talk. But she taught me 'The Ten Finger Prayer.' And even though I could not talk, she would walk into the room and just hold up ten fingers. And I knew what 'The Ten Finger Prayer' was."

"I prayed 'The Ten Finger Prayer' and I got to where I could talk. By praying 'The Ten Finger Prayer' I got to where I could sit up. They told me that I would never stand up. But by praying 'The Ten Finger Prayer' I got to where I could stand up. Then they told me that I would never walk. But by praying 'The Ten Finger Prayer,' I walked."

"And we had a commitment, that the day that I was strong enough and could walk, we were going to come to your church. And I was going to come and meet you. And today is the first time that I have been in church in over a year-and-a-half, because of my sickness and because of my stroke. And we are here today because of 'The Ten Finger Prayer.'"

She looked at me and she asked, "Do you know what 'The Ten Finger Prayer' is?" I said, "No ma'am. I do not know 'The Ten Finger Prayer.'" She said, "You mean that you are a preacher and you don't know 'The Ten Finger Prayer?'" I said, "No ma'am. I don't know 'The Ten Finger Prayer.'"

She said, "Well let me teach it to you." And she put up ten fingers and said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

##

Put your hands up - you are not that sophisticated. Put them up - it will help you. Say it with me. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Repeat.

Let's applaud the Lord.

Well so when we talk about discipleship we are talking about a dedication dimension. We are talking about a devotional dimension. But there was a declaration dimension.

And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Ten next great revival as I have said I believe will be a witnessing revival when we declare the name of Jesus. Acts 1 and 8 says -

But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the earth.

Matthew 16 and 18 - Christ said -

Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in

heaven. What you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

When He talks about the keys to the kingdom He is giving to us the power of evangelism to do the work that He has called us to do.

And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

What we have to do as we look forward to the Twenty-first Century with foreboding and misgiving, not really sure where we are going, knowing that the wheat is being separated from the chaff, we have to learn how to release our gifts to be used of the Lord in the way that He would have us to be used.

When you talk about declaration, it talks about witnessing - sharing your faith on your own terms.

We preachers - we get up here behind these fortresses and it is easy to preach to a hundred or a thousand whatever the situation may be. And I have had the privilege of speaking to over a hundred thousand in great meetings in certain places and that could give you butterflies and you feel uptight but it is nothing like having to talk one on one.

The problem with most preachers is we hide behind our preacher roles.

But sometimes you get caught out and you have to make a choice.

ILLUSTRATION

I was called to Georgia Baptist Hospital early one morning and there was an emergency and I had to get up at 5:30 a.m. - no coffee - no breakfast. Got dressed - rushed down there and got on an elevator and started up and a young nurse got on with me. We were the only two on the elevator.

Right out of the clear blue sky, she looked at me and said, "Sir, are you a Christian?" I mean, it is 6:00 A.M. and who know what you are? Who can tell? It just caught me flat-footed.

I said, "Well yes. In fact, I am a preacher." You know, when in doubt, just tell them you are a preacher. It is always a good place to hide because everybody will put on their halo and you won't be bothered anymore. If you don't want to witness, just tell people that you are a preacher. It will be over. They will begin to tell you how good they are and how long they have been going to church.

And they are going to ask you, then, about all the televangelists that fell. And they are going to want your opinion. And then school is out.

And she said, "Wouldn't you know it." I said, "What do you mean by that?" By that time we had gotten to her floor and I stepped off of the elevator with her on her floor. I said, "What do you mean by that?"

She said, "Well, I am here in nurse's training. Two weeks ago, a little Baptist church down the street had a revival and some of my friends got me to go. I went and I found Jesus Christ. It has been a wonderful experience. I have been going to the revival

every night and they have been telling us that if we don't witness, God won't bless us. Our job is to witness and I am just scared to death."

"So I got down on my knees last night and I prayed, 'God, tomorrow, the first person that I get an opportunity with, I am going to ask them if they are a Christian.' Wouldn't you know that it would be a preacher."

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The bottom line is - tell it. Look over to your neighbor and say - tell it. Look over and tell them - tell it - share it. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION

I was on a plane just three or four months ago and I sat down by this man and we just changed pleasantries as you always do and it was over.

He was reading the paper and I happened to look over his shoulder and there on the same page there was an article of a psychologist who had been immoral and had an affair, and there was an article about a tele-evangelist, a minister who had an affair and was immoral. And he kind of noticed me looking over his shoulder and saw that I was looking at that page or he perceived I was.

He saw me reading the paper and he looked over at me and said - Are you reading those headlines? I said - yes. He said - it looks like the psychologists and the preachers are ruining the country.

Now where does that put me? I thought for a minute and I said - well you know there are some preachers that are ruing the country. There are some psychiatrist that are ruining the country but the important thing about it all is to have a relationship with God. He looked at me and said - Do you have a relationship with God? That's like saying - "Sik em to a hound dog." I said - Yes I do. He said - tell me about your relationship to God. So I shared my testimony of how Jesus Christ became Lord of my life and I never did tell him that I was a psychologist or a preacher. I've learned long ago - don't tell anybody you are a preacher until you really have to.

Sometimes they asked me what I do and I say - I sell insurance. They say - what kind of insurance? I say - fire insurance. That's right - fire insurance.

You will be happy to know that before it is all over with I clarify what all that means.

The minute you say - preacher - everybody reaches in their briefcase or their purse and pulls out a halo and puts it on and polishes it. It's all over.

So I shared with him what the Lord meant to me and what He meant to my life and what He could do for him. He said - That's fantastic. I have always wanted a relationship with God. Said - I grew up in the Episcopalian Church - I don't go. I send my money in - my wife and children go. I go a couple of times a year to special programs. Said - I've never felt a relationship with God. He said - Do you think I could have a relationship with God? I

said - Sure you can have a relationship with God. He said - What do we have to do? I said - Pray. We have to pray and ask God to come in your heart. You have to confess your sins, repent of your sins, accept Him as Lord and Savior and you can have it.

I never fail to marvel at the gift of evangelism and tears came into his eyes and he got broken up and I reached over and took him by the hand. In today's world you have to be careful where you do that.

But I had his hand. So we prayed the sinner's prayer. He repeated the sinner's prayer. I marvel at the gift of that. He said - This is wonderful. Said - I don't know - he said - This must be what Jimmy Carter talked about when he talked about being born again. I said - Yes this is what Jimmy Carter talked about. Born again. He said - This is marvelous.

So it was all over and he was excited and we touched down in Atlanta. He was going to Fort Lauderdale -- where he lived and I bid him goodbye and we got in the aisle to get our stuff to get ready to leave and he said - by the way what do you do? I said - You will never believe this but I am a psychologist who pastors a church.

He said - did I stick my foot in my mouth or did I stick my foot in my mouth? I said - No - remember the important thing is a relationship to God.

I called him a couple of weeks after that to find out how he was doing and he said - we have gotten into a church and we have gotten going - said I got home and told my wife about it. I've

told her what you told me and the same thing happened to her that happened to me.

Isn't that marvelous? Do you ever praise the Lord in this place? Do you ever just praise Him?

##

So there is a declaration dimension here.

But there is a divine dimension here.

And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

He is ten difference.

I was raised in a preacher's family. My father was a rancher out in the Dakotas. Born in Indian territory. First shoes were Indian moccasins. They were called in the pioneer days to minister - my father ministered for many years. He started 67 churches in his life time.

The one thing that he taught me was that Jesus Christ is a reality. He is a living reality.

He was a great influence on my life. I used to wish he would do some really bad things so that I could justify some bad things I was doing.

What I learned from him and what I've learned from the Bible is that Jesus Christ came to reveal to us the invisible God. Jesus Christ came into the world to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Jesus Christ came into the world to validate the Davidic Covenant. Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from

our sins. Jesus Christ came into the world to be our high priest. Jesus Christ came into the world to show us how we are supposed to live. Jesus Christ came into the world to break the curse of the law. Jesus Christ came into the world to destroy the manifest works of the devil. Jesus Christ came into the world to give us the abundant life. Jesus Christ came to give us the inner resources to stand and having to done all - stand.

We just celebrated the risen Christ. The question we have to ask ourselves today - Is He really alive in our own lives?

ILLUSTRATION

We don't worship the Christ of Bethlehem. We don't worship the Christ of Jerusalem. We don't worship the Christ of Galilee. We don't worship the Christ of the cross. We don't worship the Christ of the empty tomb. We worship the Christ who is at the right hand of the Father.

##

In Hebrews chapter 4 and 14 - it tells us we

...e a high priest who has gone through the heavens and is at the right hand of God. Therefore we should hold firmly to the faith that we profess because we do not have a high priest who is unsympathetic, who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have a high priest who is tempted in every point even as we are tempted and yet without sin. Therefore, what can we do? We can come boldly

into his throne of grace and there we can find mercy and receive grace to help us in the time of need.

ILLUSTRATION

In 1980 when our son, Paul, was killed and I was at Lee College after a Homecoming Day on Thanksgiving and on the Saturday after at the Holiday Inn North I received the call and there was an unknown voice that came out of the darkness and out of the silence it said - "Are you Dr. Paul Walker?" "Yes." Said, "I've got bad news. There has been an accident. Your daughter-in-law is badly hurt; she will survive. But your son has been killed. Where do you want us to send the body?"

It becomes a test of faith doesn't it?

I began preaching when I was twenty years old. My wife and I were married at twenty and nineteen and we would preach this Jesus Christ and went through hundreds of funerals with people and through many of crisis points but now suddenly it had come home. Your first-born is dead taken out by a drunken driver. He had just finished his master's degree in psychology at Augusta College and received an appointment at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to work on a Ph.D. Getting ready to take up an instructorship while he went on his Ph.D. at our school - Lee College in Cleveland, Tennessee. Just beginning to fly. Good athlete, good musician. Everything you would want in a boy - gone.

And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Is it true - First John 4 and 4 -

He that is within us is greater than he that is in the world.

Is it true in First Corinthians 6:19 -

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you which you have of God. You are not your own, you are bought with a price.

Is it true in First Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13 -

There is no temptation that has seized you that is not common to man. And when you are tempted - two things - it will not be more than you can bear and I will give you a way to escape it. You will not fall down under it.

We went out to the cemetery - with 1,500 people gathered at the cemetery. The service was over and they were getting ready to lower the casket into the ground. My wife look at me and said - "Paul - I want to sing." I said - "Carmelita I don't feel like singing." Who wants to sing at a time like that. I was angry. Three weeks before my son and I had played golf together. A beautiful relationship - pastoring a church we had started together through a radio program. Sing. Who wants to sing? Sing. Who wants to sing.

I looked at the man who officiated at the service - whose son's funeral I had preached just a year before that because he had committed suicide. He reciprocated when I lost my son in an accident. He said, "What do you want to sing?" Carmelita said - "I want to sing - "God is so good."

Fifteen hundred people strong - across that cemetery began to sing - God is so good. Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me - bless His name."

Suddenly there came to me the understanding that it is real.

The last sermon our son preached was - He is risen. He is risen indeed. If you go to his grave marker today you will see on that - He is risen - He is risen indeed.

In Second Corinthians chapter 4 verse 8 through 10 says -

We are handicapped on every side but we are never frustrated. We are puzzled but we are near in despair. We may be knocked down but we are never knocked out. We may be persecuted but we never have to stand it alone.

Verses 16 through 18 it says -

This is the reason we never collapse. The outward person indeed suffers wear and tear but the inward person receives fresh strength daily. And these little troubles which are really so transitory are working out for us a far more solid reward out of all proportion to

our pain. For we look not at the things
which are visible for they are temporary but
we look at the things which are invisible for
they are timeless.

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Shall we pray?