

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG198 – They Were Witnesses

Hello, and welcome to the podcast today. I am glad you are joining us. I hope this is going to be a tremendous blessing to you. Today I want to talk about the fact that the disciples were truly witnesses. I am titling this podcast *They Were Witnesses*. We recognize that the disciples really were called witnesses; but sometimes the impact, I think, has left us in our church atmosphere when we discuss this term of being witnesses. We talk about the fact that you need to witness to people, or, “Let’s go out and witness,” or, “Go door-to-door and witness.” We use this terminology quite a bit among believers and within the church atmosphere; but I feel like there is something I want to reach for in this that really gives us back the true concept of being witnesses. So, let’s look at those who were witnesses of Christ.

I am going to begin in Luke the twenty-fourth chapter, in verses 13-16. As you know, this is the story about the ones who were on the road to Emmaus.

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.

This is on the day of the Resurrection, and they are making this journey. All of a sudden, the Lord comes and begins to walk with them. Yeshua shows up and He is walking with them, and they are taking the journey, and He is asking them what they are talking about. They began to repeat the story of all that had happened about Christ, and about the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, and the disciples going to the grave, and so forth. If we jump down to verse 25, we see that at some point the Lord reveals Himself to them. In verses 25-31, it says,

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

He begins to reveal Himself to them as He opens the Scriptures to them and tells them all about Himself, but they are still not seeing Him or recognizing that it is Yeshua that is with them. He goes into the house, they have the breaking of bread, and when He blesses the bread, breaking it, then they have their eyes opened, they see that it is Him, and He vanishes from their sight. So now they are just amazed.

Verses 32-36,

They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you."

He appears back again to those who were on the way to Emmaus, as well as to the disciples, the eleven disciples were there. He appears to all of them and says, "Peace be to you."

Verses 37-49,

But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them.

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

"You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

I know that we are reading a lot of verses here, but it is very necessary for us to understand that when we look at this term *witnesses*, originally those who were in fact witnesses had witnessed all of these things that had transpired. So it really was a very special term. They had seen Him after the Crucifixion, so they witnessed the resurrected Christ. They witnessed Him not only talking to them, but they also had imparted to their minds the Scriptures, something that was really important as they were going to go out and speak to the world about what they had witnessed. They needed to know how what had transpired was absolutely scriptural and followed down through all of the Scriptures. So their minds were opened and they had that experience. They were witnesses of the Word.

I want to give another example, and this deals with the replacement of Judas after the Ascension of Christ. In Acts the first chapter, at verses 21-22, it says, "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." We know that Judas, after he had betrayed the Lord, committed suicide. And we know that, according to the Scriptures, he had to be replaced; his apostleship had to be filled by someone else. So here, they are talking about who it is that will replace Judas. Notice the qualification: it had to be somebody who had witnessed all of the things that had transpired, from the baptism of John until the day Christ was taken up to the right hand of the Father. That was the requirement of Judas' replacement. Truly, this individual could not just be an apostle; they had to be a witness of these things

all the way to His Ascension. We see that this was an absolute requirement in that time, for all of the apostles were truly witnesses.

When they then did as He told them – “Wait in Jerusalem until you are endued with this power from on high” – they did receive the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. We are just in the days prior to the day of Pentecost, and I believe that is one of the reasons why this message is so important for us; because again, it is so easy to, in a sense, downgrade these concepts that the Bible was emphasizing so much and making so important. These guys going to Emmaus and beholding the Lord, hearing again the Scriptures being unveiled, and then running to the apostles and telling them about what had transpired – all of that was part of this idea that immediately following the Ascension of Christ, there came this great anointing on the Day of Pentecost, which endued the 120 with power. This 120 were part of those who had witnessed the many events and walked with Christ for the time of His ministry.

Of course, this is a big deal, because now they are going to begin to tell the story right here in Jerusalem, as the Holy Spirit falls and it is being witnessed by all those who were gathered for the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. They began explaining the fact that Christ was the Messiah, and He was resurrected; and of course, this is where it was so powerful that thousands believed. But, again, I think sometimes we lose the impact, that here are all these individuals – not only are they filled with the Holy Spirit, and so the anointing upon them was tremendous; but they were, in fact, **witnesses** of these things. They were telling people what they had seen, what they had heard, what they truly were witnesses of. And I believe that there is something we need in this timeframe that we are in. You know, it is time to minister to the world around us; and in doing this, I believe we need to see true witnesses coming into the earth today and doing that. We cannot sell short the power of what it is to have witnesses.

Christ, when He talked about the end days, said that the Gospel would go forth as a witness. And it needs to go forth, not as a witness, but from and by witnesses at this time. So I think that there is something that we should look for in our own hearts, in our own experience. There is no reason for us not to take another step beyond where I believe we have been and where the church has been – just encouraging us and using this terminology of *witness*. I think that we are using the term too lightly. I think we are taking away from the veracity of it, and the impact of it, that it needs to have. The truth is, most of the time we are not witnesses; we are simply believers who are telling people what we believe in, what our faith is. We may be talking about our faith in something, but the very concept of that is showing that we are not witnesses; we are believing in something. What are we believing in? We are believing in what these witnesses wrote down in the Gospels. We are believing in what has been passed down from generation to generation through the Christian faith. And that is wonderful, and it can be powerful, but I do not know if it is the kind of power that we should expect to impact the world during these days of the end.

When I look at what is going on in the world around us today, I feel like there is a need for two elements: One, that we truly be witnesses. Two, that we be endued with power from on high through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I believe it is this type of combination that is going to be necessary in order to address the wickedness and the depravity that is surrounding us in the world today. So, I want to encourage us as we approach these days of Pentecost, that we reach in to the Lord for something greater. I think that we should contend with Him. I think we should cry out to Him, and say, “We don’t, in this generation, want to be believers who are simply telling people about what we believe in, about our faith.” People have heard too much of that type of story about religion, and it just sounds like

religion to people's ears when they hear it coming from that level. I believe what this generation needs are true witnesses, under the power of the Holy Spirit, that can bring an impartation of change to the lives of individuals that are hearing it. So, I am believing and crying out to the Lord in my own heart: I want to be a witness, and I want to be filled with the power of Your Spirit. But first of all, Lord, make us witnesses.

Maybe it seems like that is not possible after the Ascension, but I do not hold to that; and I really intend to address that in the next podcast. So, I encourage you to not just listen to this and study it, but also to listen to the upcoming podcast, where we will address this issue of, "How can we be witnesses after the Ascension?" In the meantime, what I would like for you to do is to go back into Luke 24 and read this whole story, and let it sink in. Let it really impact your life, and let it impact your heart, and let it be something that we use in order to contend with the Lord as we are approaching these tremendous days of the Feast of Pentecost. Lord bless you in this.

Amen.