

# GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



## GIG199 – Paul Was a Witness

Hello everyone, and thanks for joining me for this podcast. I appreciate your being here. The title of this podcast today is *Paul Was a Witness*. In the last podcast, I addressed the fact that the individuals who were the apostles were definitely witnesses of what had transpired. And there were others besides just the apostles themselves that had witnessed the things which had taken place through the life and ministry of Christ; especially the time of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, His last supper, the trial and crucifixion of the Lord. These events were witnessed by very many people. And I was talking about the fact that we today use that term *witness* very loosely, I believe. We tend to apply it to just talking to people about our faith. That, to me, is not being a witness; that, to me, is talking to someone as a believer about what you believe, or what your faith is. A witness is somebody who has actually seen and heard, firsthand, and now is conveying what they know because they saw it, they were there, they heard it. That is a witness.

In the last podcast I began out of Luke the twenty-fourth chapter; and I would encourage you to read Luke the twenty-fourth chapter, starting at verse 13 and going all the way down through verse 53. This is the story about the Resurrection Day, when two of the disciples, or the followers of Yeshua, are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are walking along the road to get to Emmaus, and Christ Himself approaches them and begins walking with them and talking with them, asking them, "What are you talking about? What is going on?" They were talking about all of the events that had transpired with the Lord, about the fact that He had been crucified and that there was talk of His resurrection. So, at some point, the Lord begins to unfold to them the Scriptures. In verses 25-27, He says, "'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." He opens up the Scriptures to them, which is very important because there is a great conflict as to whether Yeshua is the Messiah or not; and so, to be able to go back through the Scriptures and show that He was, in fact, the Messiah is very much a part of this witness. You say, "What were they witnessing?" They were witnessing Him teach the Scriptures. So, as well as beholding with their eyes the events, it was beholding with their minds, their eyes, and their hearts Him teaching the Scriptures in a way that had not been done yet.

As they approach the village, they request for Him to come and eat with them, and to stay with them; and so, He goes with them. When they sit down at the table to eat, in verses 30-31 it says, "When He had reclined at the 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." So these guys were talking and saying, "Boy, weren't our hearts burning when He was revealing Himself through the Scriptures to us?" And now their eyes are open to see that this was, in fact, the Lord who was speaking with them.

In verse 33, they get up and they run back to Jerusalem. And when they get back to Jerusalem, they find that gathered together are the eleven and those who were with them (so it was more than just the apostles that were there). In verses 34-37, it says, "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 ['Shalom'], 'Peace be to you.' But they were all startled and frightened...." He says, "Listen, don't be troubled," and He shows them His feet and He shows them His hands. He is proving that it is in fact Him, not just a spirit that they are beholding. After this, He takes something to eat, and in verses 44-45, it says, "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." So He tells them the story, He opens their minds, shows them the Scripture, so that they can pass on biblically through the Hebrew Scriptures what has transpired, and that they are speaking of Him, back from Moses and beyond; and they have this tremendous appearing from Him.

In verse 47 it goes on to say that they are to speak about the repentance for forgiveness of sins, and that they would proclaim His name to the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. And He says in verse 48, "'You are witnesses of these things.'" They were, in fact, witnesses of all of the things that they were to speak of, or as some would say, "to testify of." When you look at the Greek, the root word for *witness* and *testify*, or *testimony*, is the same root word; it is the same meaning. So whether you use witness, or testimony, or testify, it is the same. But I want us to get the impact of the fact that the apostles and others of those who were there were truly witnesses of what had transpired through Christ and through His ministry, through His crucifixion and His resurrection.

In verse 49, He said, "'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.'" Not only were they witnesses of these things, not only did their minds witness Him teaching the Scriptures, but their hearts witnessed who He was, their eyes saw Him, they touched Him. They were truly, in every sense of the word, witnesses of Christ. And the reason I want to make this important is because I think that today it is too easy for us just to say, "Oh, we should go out and witness about Christ. We should witness about the Gospel." I think that when we say *witness* today, too often what we are really talking about is that we are believers who are passing on to others what we believe; and maybe why we believe, but it is talking about our faith. And I think we should really understand that there is a difference between being a witness and talking about our faith to other people. The reason it is important is because I think that we should reach with all of our hearts in this day and age; because I believe that we are in the end times, and I believe that in the end times there is something a little bit more necessary in the power of God to come through to this world to hear about the Christ. I believe this generation needs witnesses, not just people talking about their faith.

So, is it possible that we can contend to be witnesses? The first thing I think people are going to say is, "How can I be a witness of these things when these things are historical events which took place 2,000 years ago? And now, you are here telling me to be a witness? I can't go back and see that, nobody captured it on film." So, how do we become witnesses? Is it possible to become a witness of these things in our generation? I think the answer to that, and the reason for this podcast, is to say, "Yes, I believe that we, 2,000 years later, can become witnesses of the Christ. We can be witnesses of Yeshua. We can be witnesses of His life and His ministry and His cross experience and His resurrection, and all that He means to the Church, all that has transpired as He has ascended to the right hand of the Father." And I know maybe that seems like a lot, but I believe that it is true, and I believe that the answer is held in the ministry of Paul. I believe it is one of the reasons that Paul is so significant. I believe it is why it was significant for Paul, as he says, to be "one born out of time." It was significant that he was not there for

the events that transpired, as were the other apostles and disciples; yet at the same time, he definitely is told to be a witness, because he became a witness after the Ascension of Christ.

First Corinthians 15 is where we will begin, in verses 3-8. This is Paul speaking.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

When we look at the ministry of Paul, we recognize that Christ appeared to him, just as He appeared to those on the road to Emmaus; just as He appeared to the disciples and apostles who were in that room, after those two from Emmaus were telling the story – He appeared to them, and they were witnesses of His appearing, of His resurrection, and they were witnesses of the Scriptures because He opened their minds. So, you see much of what they were witness to did have that mystical aspect to it, that it was something beyond just what your eye sees or your ear hears. Even though their eyes did witness as it was happening the life and ministry of Christ, it was also this impartation; because we know for sure that the apostles, even though they saw, even though they heard, they still did not believe even after the Resurrection. Even while He was appearing to them in the room, they thought He was a spirit. So, there was this necessity of an impartation and a vision given, a mystical aspect of the appearing that came to those apostles, that was part of the understanding that truly solidified them as witnesses. Because without that mystical impartation, like opening their minds to the Scriptures, they never would have known what they saw, or understood what they saw, in order to truly be witnesses.

I know that it also works the other way around. With Paul, he saw the appearing of Christ after the Ascension to the right hand of the Father; and therefore, I understand that imparted to Paul was all that had transpired in His life and His ministry and the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. And so, Paul was truly a witness of Christ. When he is talking about this experience himself in Corinthians, he says, “I delivered to you as of first importance what **I received**, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised.” See, Paul is giving as a witness what was delivered to him, what was imparted to him, what he saw when he saw Christ. So, his mind was opened to see, to behold, all that had transpired with Christ; and therefore, he is delivering to us as a witness that which is of first importance, which he had received directly from Christ in His appearing to him “as one untimely born.”

I hope you can see how important this is for us, because it does answer the question, “Is it possible to become a witness of Yeshua, a witness of the Christ, of the Resurrection; a witness following these historical events by 2,000 years after He has ascended to the right hand of the Father?” For me, I think the answer to that from these Scriptures is truly, “Yes, it is possible.” Paul also tells of his story in the book of Acts. There are several times that the story about Paul is given in the Scriptures. And I think that is important, because the repeating of it is an emphasis of it, an emphasis of the truth of it, the impact of it, and what actually transpired in the events of Christ appearing to him. Because it was not just one singular event, it was multiple things that transpired.

In Acts 22, we have such an example in verses 6 through 16. I encourage you to read these verses, and I would encourage you to find other of the stories and read those, too.

Paul was conveying this in verses 6-9,

“But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.’ And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.”

In other words, they had some event that they witnessed, but they did not become witnesses of Christ through the events; because, again, they did not have this same mystical experience of impartation to their hearts and minds to be considered truly witnesses. So, he goes on to tell the story. We will skip down to verses 12-14. He says,

“A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing near said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very time I looked up at him. And he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.’” [So Paul was to see and to hear the Righteous One.]

Look at verse 15: “For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.” Paul truly became a witness after the fact. But it was not something he made up. It was not something he was hearing from others. It was not something that he was telling people about a faith that he had. He was telling them what he saw and what he heard when the Righteous One appeared to him. And in the appearing to him, the Lord talked about other appearances that he would have; this was not just a singular experience that happened for Paul, it was multiple experiences that transpired. But Paul was called a witness. He said, “You will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.” Paul saw and heard. He was not talking about what he had heard from the apostles; he did not go listen to the disciples and say, “Oh, tell me the stories about walking with the Lord over those years.” He saw and heard for himself. Beautiful! It is available. We can become witnesses, because Paul was a man of like passions as us, and God is no respecter of persons. I believe that Paul’s experience can be our experience.

Let’s continue with this and go a little further. In Second Corinthians 12, starting at verse 1, he says, “Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord.” See, he had ongoing visions and revelations of the Lord. He continued to see and hear from the Christ, and he continued to see the resurrected Lord as he went forward in his ministry.

Verses 2-4,

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

Paul here is again conveying to us what he experienced being caught up into the third heaven. So not only has Paul seen and experienced the Christ in the flesh on the earth, and what transpired in his life on the earth; he also was caught up into the third heaven and saw things that are inexpressible in words, and heard things which cannot be spoken. So he was a witness of those things which he saw and heard in the heavens. And we know that because it was so phenomenal, God gave him a thorn in the flesh,

a messenger from satan, to keep him humble. Otherwise, he could have been puffed up by that which he saw and heard and knew and understood.

So, why is this podcast important? because we are entering the days of the Feast of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And I believe it is the Spirit who will teach us all things and lead us into all understanding. I believe it was by the Spirit that Paul was able to have these experiences which made him a witness. And I believe that by the Holy Spirit, it is not just some vague anointing that we are believing for; instead, I believe we are contending for that which should be a true experience for us and which makes us witnesses.

I just want to re-emphasize a couple of points:

Paul was a true witness. He really was a witness, and he became that witness following the Ascension of Christ.

If Paul could become such a witness, then I believe we can also.

Paul is proof that we can become witnesses in our generation.

And please remember, there is a great deal of difference between being a witness and being a believer talking about our faith. We need to be witnesses to this generation, and I believe we can be that by faith as we reach in for this time of Pentecost.

Amen.