

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG200 – Lord, Let Us Be Witnesses

Hi, and welcome to the podcast today. I would like to say happy Feast of Pentecost! I believe this podcast will be released on the Day of Pentecost, and so I hope that it is an impartation and you enjoy it very much. I am going to be talking about my focus for this Feast of Pentecost and what I am really believing for, not just for myself, but I believe there is going to be something for the body of Christ that we can break through into for and during this time of Pentecost. To begin with, if you could, please listen to the previous two podcasts that have been released. The first is called *They Were Witnesses*, and the second, *Paul Was a Witness*. I am titling this podcast *Lord, Let Us Be Witnesses*. This idea is something that I think we need to get a hold of, because today, in today's church and today's Christian faith, I think we use and handle the word *witness* very lightly. We talk about witnessing to people, and how to witness to people; there are lessons on teaching people how to witness to others. But I believe that the term *witness* is very, very important. It is very powerful, and I do not want it to lose its power and impact on us today as believers. There is something I contend for that we as believers today should move into, in becoming witnesses. If we do not, then I think we are not really witnessing Christ to the world; we instead are believers in Christ telling people about our faith. And I do believe that there is an extreme difference.

In the previous podcast, we talked about the fact that the disciples, the apostles, were definitely witnesses of the things of Christ. And that, of course, brings up the question – can we, after 2,000 years, be witnesses when these events have already historically transpired? How do we go back to witness them firsthand, and therefore become qualified according to the scriptural definition of a witness? In the second podcast, *Paul Was a Witness*, we discussed the fact that Paul himself was truly a witness; and I believe that Paul being a witness means that we also are capable of being witnesses. Now, how does that work? That works because, as Paul said, he was as “one untimely born” – he was the one that the Lord appeared to after He had appeared to all of the other disciples. So Paul had this experience. Now when the Lord appeared to the disciples and opened their minds to the Scriptures, He told them, “You are witnesses of these things.” But when we go on to Paul, in First Corinthians 15:7-8 Paul says that the Lord “appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.” Christ appeared to Paul after His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father. And in His appearing to Paul, He showed him what had transpired, the things that had gone on previously; and therefore, he was to be a witness. This is talked about in Acts the twenty-second chapter; you get the whole story in verses 6-16. The prophet Ananias came to Paul, laid hands on him and blessed him, and announced to him, as Paul accounts it in his own words in verses 13-15,

Ananias... 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. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.”

In this appearing of Christ to him, we know that Christ showed him all of that which he needed to see and hear in order to be honestly considered a witness. Paul did not go around telling people what he

had heard from the other apostles, or what he had heard from the disciples in the experience of walking with the Lord. But I believe the Lord literally ran it before him in impartation like a movie, so he himself became a firsthand witness to these things, after the fact. And if that sounds strange to you, do not forget that there was a tremendous amount of impartation that the disciples themselves received; because when Christ appeared to them, they thought it was a spirit, and they still did not understand the Scriptures, and they still did not understand what Christ had been speaking to them about. And so it says in the story, "He opened their minds." There was a great deal of impartation, even to the apostles, that made them witnesses by virtue of understanding through the revelation that was given to them at His appearing to them.

When we talk about being witnesses, we understand that there was a great deal of impartation from Christ by the Spirit that was given both to the apostles and to the other disciples – because remember, there were 120 on the day of Pentecost that were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness, and were part of the witness to the peoples that were in Jerusalem and beyond. So we see this element of impartation that comes by the appearances and by revelation to individuals that makes them a witness. The Lord told Paul that he would be a witness, and He imparted to him that which he needed to see and hear firsthand in order to be a witness of those things.

In Second Corinthians 12 we see another example with Paul. He talks about it starting in verse 1: "Boasting... is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord." See, when the Lord first appeared to Paul, He told him at that time, "This is not the last time I am going to appear to you." And so, here we see Paul in Corinthians saying that he did go on to other visions and revelations of the Lord. In fact, in verses 2-4 he starts to account one of these events. He says,

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 was caught up literally into the heavens and saw and heard things that he was witness of. He was a witness of those things because he saw them firsthand, he heard them firsthand. So Paul was a witness. And I am saying all of this because it is very important for us that we understand that even though these events transpired 2,000 years ago, we are not just to be believers going around telling people about our faith. I do not believe there is enough power behind that to crack through the wickedness of this age and to really open the hearts of men the way they need to be opened for the day that we are living in. I am personally believing that in this Day of Pentecost, we are going to experience something that is going to be like Paul experienced in the appearing of the Lord to us by the Spirit. And in that, the impartation will exist where we will know these things, see these things, hear these things, and not be telling what we have heard secondhand.

When you read the Hebrew Scriptures, to be a witness meant that you saw and heard firsthand what you were testifying about; otherwise it was not legal, otherwise it had no impact or authority in the courtroom. And I think that is where us not being witnesses of these things takes away a level of the authority and impact of what we have to say to the world. So let's believe that in this day and age, even though these are historical events, we can still by the Spirit be witnesses. These things can be imparted to us. Christ opened their minds to the Scriptures to see, to know what the Scriptures were saying about Him. So there is a spiritual experience which is also an actual, natural experience to our eyes and ears

and hearts, as well as to our spirits, that I believe we can have in our generation, that prepares us as Paul was prepared to be the apostle that was to write the Scriptures and to out-work the other apostles.

Maybe you do not believe this, and that is fine if you do not want to believe it. One thing I know is, if you do not believe, you will not receive. So I want to believe, because I want to receive what God has available for us in our generation in order to empower us and prepare us to be true witnesses in this day and age.

I want to give you a couple of other examples of the difference in the Scriptures. In the story of Job we find it in chapter 42, starting at verse 1. You know, the Lord started talking to Job and He was telling him all these things, and obviously appearing to him in what he had gone through. In verses 1-6 it says,

Then Job answered the Lord and said, "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes."

We know that Job was a godly man, and we know that God allowed him to be tested; and the outcome of that testing was the Lord's appearing to him. When the Lord appeared to Job, he was able to express what is really on my heart to express to us as believers: how much do we speak out of that which we do not know?

I want to go back to verse 3: ""Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge." Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand."" In other words, Job has just gone through this whole book where he is telling about all his wisdom and understanding, and what he knows and what he believes about God, and what he has had up to that point. But he says, ""I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. "Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me." I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear."" And I think this is true of most of us as believers. We have heard the Gospel by the hearing of the ear. But all of a sudden, Job says, ""Now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.""

I think there is an experience that for me, personally, I really want to have. I want to have such a visual of the Lord. I want to have the appearing of the Lord. I want to have the impartation of His Spirit that shows me my ignorance, that shows me that I have been speaking out of what I have heard from others, but what I have yet to see firsthand and become a witness of in myself. When Job had that experience, his first reaction was repentance. I loose for myself, and I loose for us as the body of Christ, a level of repentance that reaches in to say, "It is not enough. What we have had is not enough." It is not enough to hear about the things of the Lord – we should be pressing in to behold Him, to see Him as He is. "Ask, and keep on asking" – we should ask to be witnesses of His in our generation. And we should experience a deep repentance for the fact that we have been satisfied in speaking from a place of things that we do not really know, because we have only heard them secondhand through others. But now Job was seeing, and becoming a witness himself.

I want to go to First Corinthians chapter 13, starting at verses 8-12. It says,

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did

away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

I believe this is addressing us today. We have lived in the partial. The church, for the most part, through most ages has functioned through the partial. I am not saying that there have never been those that became firsthand witnesses. I believe there were, because I do believe that it is a potential to reach in and truly become a witness in any generation. Paul was emphasizing that fact. And again, we are talking about Paul – Paul knows what he is talking about, because he himself became a witness after the fact. And we are going to be witnesses after the fact of these things that have transpired down through the ages, down through the Scriptures.

Up until that time, we really need to understand that we know in part and we have spoken in part. We have taught partial truths. “But when he became a man, the childish things were done away” – because how did he become that mature? “For now we see in a mirror dimly.” See, we are looking, we are looking to behold. How do you change, according to the Scriptures? “While beholding Him, we are changed from glory to glory into His image.” To become witnesses, we must behold Him. We must see Him. And Paul is saying, “Look, we have been looking in a mirror dimly. It has been cloudy to us, but then, face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known.” That is a firsthand experience he is dealing with now, and he is telling us we should be reaching for that. He goes on in verse 13 to say, “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” And I think this love is pointing to the fact that when we see Him, we are blown away by love, and we will become that in our witness to the world.

I think, again, it is part of the problem – how do we witness of a love that we do not know? that we have not encountered firsthand in seeing Him ourselves? Up until that point, we can talk about the love of God, but it is like we are speaking as those who have experienced it through the mirror dimly. We need it face to face. We need to know that love of God. We need to know the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord which is beyond knowledge. But when we receive it, it says we will be “filled to all the fullness of God.” See, there is a fullness that must take place. We talk about the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and as we celebrate this time of Pentecost, we look for the fullness. We do not want a partial filling, we do not want a partial experience with the Holy Spirit. We want the fullness of the Spirit to come and open the door for us to see face to face, and to know, even as we are known.

Lord, give us this in this Day of Pentecost.

I want to read one more Scripture out of John the third chapter. This is the Lord speaking with Nicodemus, and He tells Nicodemus that you have to be born again.

Verses 4-11,

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you,

we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.”

First of all, we have to understand that in the Greek, *testify* and *testimony* are the same root as witness. So He is saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our witness.” If you go to the King James, it actually uses the term witness. So, Nicodemus is caught maybe in the same problem that some people listening to this podcast are caught into, where he says at the beginning, “How can these things be? Can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time?” People are going to say, “How can we become witnesses of things which have transpired thousands of years ago? How can that be possible?” And Christ goes on to say, “By the Spirit, being born again by the Spirit, it is possible. We are witnesses of that which we know, and witnesses of that which we have seen.” Christ Himself came down from heaven and was a witness of what He had experienced and known and seen of the Father, and of the heavenlies. He was a true firsthand witness to mankind when He came to earth, and He opened up the door for us, likewise, to become witnesses. So even if it seems impossible now, like it did to Nicodemus, it is possible that we are born by the Spirit – as Paul was, as one born out of time – to become true witnesses of the things of God, of the things of Christ, of His life, of His birth, of His death, and of His resurrection, to this age we live in.

I want to go also to Matthew the twenty-fourth chapter. I think this is important; this is Christ as He was speaking on the Mount of Olives. You can read verses 3 down through 14, that would really cover this. Christ is sitting on the Mount of Olives and the disciples come to Him and say, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming?” So He goes through and He gives many directions about what they are going to experience. And in verses 9-11, He says, “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.” Now see, this to me becomes important, because Christ is warning that in the last days there are going to be many false witnesses, right? many testimonies that are not true. And that is why I think the power that we need is to be witnesses, not passing on stories or being believers telling what faith we have. We need to be witnesses of the things, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to break through the lies that will come in this age.

Verses 12-14, “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” Remember that love, as we were reading in Corinthians, comes because you see – we see Him, and that love comes through to us. It is not something partial. “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” We are talking about the end time. We are talking about how things transpire at the end of the age. I am going to read verse 14 again, but I am going to read it this time out of the King James. Several other versions say it and translate it the same way out of the Greek: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world **for a witness** unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” So the question I have is, “Can the Gospel of the Kingdom be preached as a witness if there are no witnesses?”

I do not think that we need to be telling stories about our faith. We truly need witnesses. We know that the Kingdom is preached to all the world as a witness, and I believe it has to come through from the witnesses that God has raised up in order for that to be effective. So, we believe for this. We believe that we can experience becoming the witnesses of the Lord by the fullness of His Spirit and the

appearings of Him to us in this day and age. And all I can say is, "Lord, Lord, let us be Your witnesses in this generation."

Amen.