

12.09.2020 SHARING THE STORY OF JESUS

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. 1 John 5:13

Before the Creation of this world, the Godhead planned man's redemption and salvation. God the Son volunteered to come down to earth, divesting Himself of the prerogatives of Divinity and taking upon Himself the likeness of Man. As the Son of Man, He would accomplish a perfect salvation for His people. In recognition of His finished work, God the Father exalted His Son to His right hand in heaven and poured out the Holy Spirit on earth to make the salvation of Christ Jesus real in the life of all who would believe in the name of the Son of God.

Jesus, the Basis of our Testimony

It is no surprise then, that Jesus Christ is the basis and centre of all our testimony. Every Christian knows of his life BEFORE CHRIST and the radical change AFTER he encountered CHRIST.

Paul describes our lives before and after Christ in the epistle to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:1-3 - Before Christ:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Ephesians 2:4-10 – After Christ:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Paul often testified of his life before and after his encounter with Christ:

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother...Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. **But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy."** And they glorified God in me. Galatians 1:13-24

The Transformative Power of Personal Testimony

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. **And they realized that they had been with Jesus.** Acts 4:13, 14*

John the Apostle's life was also a great testimony to how fellowship with Christ changes the life. When Jesus met him, he and his brother James were rough fishermen, quick to anger, the 'sons of thunder' (Mark 3:17) who wanted to destroy an entire village because they felt offended by how they had been treated there (Luke 9:54).

And yet, when John became an old man, his one theme was the love of God. In his gospel, he referred to himself as the disciple that Jesus kept on loving. His first epistle affirms the love of God and exhorts us to reciprocate, for love begets love.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
1 John 4:7-11

‘Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores.’ *Acts of the Apostles. p 559*

Telling the Story of Jesus

Jesus...said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” Mark 5:19

Telling others the story of Jesus and His great salvation has a greater impact when men and women see the change that Christ’s salvation has wrought in our lives.

The words of Jesus in the above passage are addressed to a demon-possessed man who received spiritual, mental and physical healing from Jesus in a dramatic way. Most of us do not have dramatic conversion stories, but if we have truly accepted Christ and allowed His Spirit to work in us, we too will have a story to tell of what Jesus has done for us personally.

Testifying with Assurance

The basis of our assurance is the faithful God who loves us unconditionally and unchangingly. He sent His Son Christ Jesus to accomplish our salvation.

1. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the **faithful** God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations Deut 7:9
2. God is **faithful**, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Cor 1 :9
3. **Faithful** is he that calls you, who also will do it. 1Thess 5:24
4. But the Lord is **faithful**, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. 2 Thes 3:3
5. This [is] a **faithful** saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1 Tim 1:15
6. If we believe not, yet he remains **faithful**: he cannot deny himself. 2 Tim 2:13
7. And from Jesus Christ, who is the **faithful** witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood Rev 1:5
8. **Rom 8:31-39 is the great passage where Paul explains the basis of our assurance:**

Verse 31: God is for us; therefore no-one can be against us

Verse 32: God gave His Son for us all; therefore He gives us all things in Christ.

Verse 33: God has declared us righteous (justified us); therefore no-one can accuse us.

Verse 34: Christ is the risen High Priest and Intercessor; therefore no-one can condemn us.

Verse 35-37: Christ has conquered Satan; therefore, no matter what Satan throws at us, we remain conquerors in Christ Jesus.

Verse 38, 39: There is nothing and no-one, nothing on earth and nothing in heaven that can separate us from the unchanging, unconditional, self-giving love of God that has been revealed to us in the life of Christ Jesus His Son, the Saviour of the world.

Something worth Testifying About

There is a cost to following Jesus and being a witness to His Name. Recognising that 'in our flesh dwells no good thing', we are called to deny self daily and follow Jesus. It is only as we accept our death 'in Christ' and allow Him to live out His life within us that we will truly reflect the life of Jesus and cause men and women to be drawn to Him.

*For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. **But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.** We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— **always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.** 2 Corinthians 4:5-10*

Conclusion:

If I am to truly share the story of Jesus, I must:

1. Have a story to tell of Jesus, the Saviour of the world.
2. The story of Christ must be true. Christ is the faithful witness; I must be a faithful witness to Him. I must not give men a false vision of the gospel, of what it takes to be saved.
3. Have a story to tell of my personal friendship with Jesus; what He has done for me, how He has led me through the years, how He has done all things well for me and made every situation in my life 'work together for my good'.
4. Be humble. I must be willing to tell people that the Lord has had compassion on me and that I am a sinner saved by grace.
5. Be motivated by love for souls as Christ was and like Him, to be willing to make any sacrifice to gain men and women for the kingdom of God.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ..." Galatians 2:20
