

The Importance of Personal Testimony



Pages From My Life's Book (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you some of the Keys to Successful Living that God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

The title that I have chosen for my talk this week is, "Pages from My Life's Book." I will be sharing with you in an intimate way, personal experiences in my walk with God that have built my faith and shaped my life's destiny.

First, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we will be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

The main aspect of my life that I want to share with you this week will be my personal search for truth as a young man. However, my talk today will be introductory. Before I relate any personal experiences of my own, I want to establish one basic principle of Scripture: God expects us as Christians, to share our personal testimony with those around us.

The first Scripture that we will look at together today will be Acts 1:8. These are the final words that Jesus spoke to His disciples before He was taken up again to heaven. He spoke to them as He was standing with them on the Mount of Olives. I always feel there is a special significance in the last words that a man speaks to those who have been very close to him, knowing that he is not going to meet them again the same way, that these are his final words. And so I have always attached great importance to these final words of Jesus here in Acts 1:8. He says this:

> "...but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

It is significant, I believe, that the last words that fell from the lips of Jesus on earth were those words, "the remotest part of the earth." I believe Jesus had in mind that this testimony

of Him and His gospel had to be carried to every nation, every people, every tribe, every tongue, all races everywhere that live on the face of the earth. That was where His mind was as He left His disciples and He gave a very simple process by which this task could be carried out. There are just two stages to it. First of all, every believer needs to be empowered personally by the Holy Spirit. This is very practical. The message that we have to carry as Christians is a supernatural message. It centers in supernatural events—the death and resurrection of Jesus—and it needs a supernatural power to make it real and vivid to those to whom we speak. The supernatural power that God has ordained and made available is the power of the Holy Spirit. So, the first step in the program of Jesus is for each believer to be individually empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Then, the second step is that each believer tells others what God has done for him. And this process is just carried on that way. Each believer who hears and believes, in turn is empowered by the Holy Spirit, in turn tells others, and those others, in turn as they believe, are empowered by the Holy Spirit and go on to tell others. In this, if we are faithful, this testimony of Jesus, this message of the gospel, can indeed be carried to the remotest part of the earth.

We need to make a very important distinction between witnessing and preaching. Preaching is proclaiming the truth of Scripture and I believe it is, in a certain sense, a ministry that God gives particularly to some of His servants. But witnessing is different. Witnessing is talking in a personal way about our own experiences. It is telling others what God has done in our lives. And though not all Christians probably are called to preach, I believe all true Christians should be witnesses.

And then notice that Jesus doesn't say, "You will witness," He says, "You will be witnesses." In other words, it is not just the words that we speak but it is the life that we live that has to testify to Jesus and what He's done in our lives. In fact, sometimes if people do not live the life, it is better for them not to talk too much about it. Jesus' program is that each one of us should be a witness wherever we are: in the home, in the workplace, in the school or the university. Wherever it may be, Jesus wants us to be His witnesses, both to talk and to live in such a way that we reflect what Jesus has done in our lives.

It is a remarkable fact that the Christian faith conquered the Roman Empire within three centuries. The Roman Empire was undoubtedly one of the most powerful, proud and long-lived empires in human history. It was regarded in its day as the very epitome of power and authority. And yet, in less than three centuries from the time that Jesus spoke those words on the Mount of Olives to that little group of men, the Roman Emperor himself had bowed the knee at the name of Jesus, the name of a Jewish carpenter's son who had been crucified on a Roman cross by a Roman governor. It was almost inconceivable that such a thing could happen and yet Christianity had conquered the Roman Empire. How? Not by revolution, not by war, not be staging marches or making protests; but by spiritual weapons.

And I think perhaps the most universal and the most effective of all those spiritual weapons was the testimony of the early Christians. You see, they came from so many different backgrounds, different races, different religions, different social levels, but they just had one thing in common: they had met Jesus and He had changed their lives and the whole ancient world just could not stand up against the impact of this testimony.

In Ephesians 3:10, we read this about God's purpose for the church.

> "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms..."

It is through the church that God is going to demonstrate His wisdom to the universe and it is a manifold wisdom, a many-sided wisdom.

The wisdom of God is like a diamond, cut with many facets and each believer is just one facet. He has some unique aspect of God's wisdom to reveal to the world and he reveals it by his testimony.

In connection with the importance of personal testimony, I want to point out to you the primary responsibility of apostles, the primary reason for which apostles were chosen and appointed by God. After the disloyalty of Judas, after his suicide, it became necessary for another man to be appointed in his place as an apostle. And Peter spoke to the believers gathered and he told them why it was necessary and what kind of man should be chosen to be the apostle to take the place of Judas. This is what Peter said in Acts 1:21–22:

> "Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his

> resurrection."

Two key words there: witness and resurrection. The primary function of an apostle was not to be a preacher or a teacher, that was secondary. The primary function of an apostle was to be a witness of what he had seen and heard of Jesus himself, and for those original apostles, they had to be witnesses of the life and ministry of Jesus from the time of John's baptism to the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. But there was one particular thing which particularly they had to give testimony to, the most important thing of all: His resurrection. So they had to be witnesses with the other apostles of Jesus' resurrection.

You see, the resurrection is the central fact of the Christian faith. It is the good news that the whole world needs to hear.

I am reminded of the words of a hymn that I particularly love, which ends with these words: "May the Book of Life never close 'til the whole world knows; He arose, He arose." That is my prayer, that the Book of Life may not close until every human being on the face of the earth has heard this one vital fact of human history, this life-changing fact, this fact that can bring hope and peace where there is despair and loneliness and utter hopelessness: the fact that death has been conquered, that Jesus arose.

Let us look at the way Ananias spoke to the apostle Paul, the apostle-to-be, when he was still Saul of Tarsus in the city of Damascus and God sent him to pray for Saul of Tarsus that he might receive his sight. This is Paul's own testimony, given in Acts 22:14–15, of what Ananias said to him.

> "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.'"

Again, notice the primary calling in the life of Paul. It was not to be a preacher; primarily it was to be a witness to all men of what he had seen and heard. That is what a witness is. He speaks firsthand of what he has seen and heard.

And then we read Paul's words a little later on in the book of Acts, as he gave a defense of himself before King Agrippa. In Acts 26:22–23:

> "But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to His own people and to the Gentiles."

You see, Paul was testifying to everybody, small and great, no one too high or too low. His testimony was directed toward two sources: first of all, Moses and the prophets (that's the Scriptures); secondly, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our testimony should do the same.

As I close this message today, let me remind you of the most important fact of human history and personal experience: Jesus is alive.

Our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I will begin to share with you some of my personal experiences in my "Search for Truth."

Radio Program

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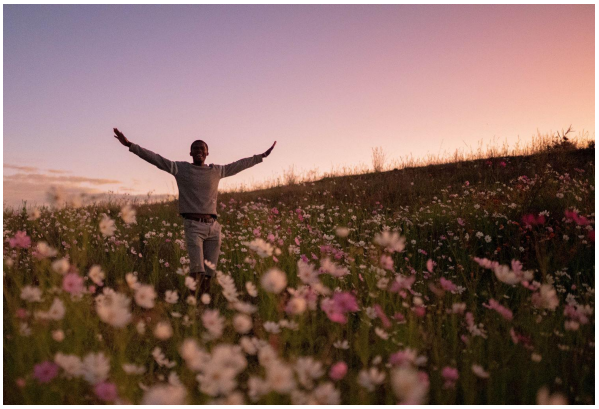

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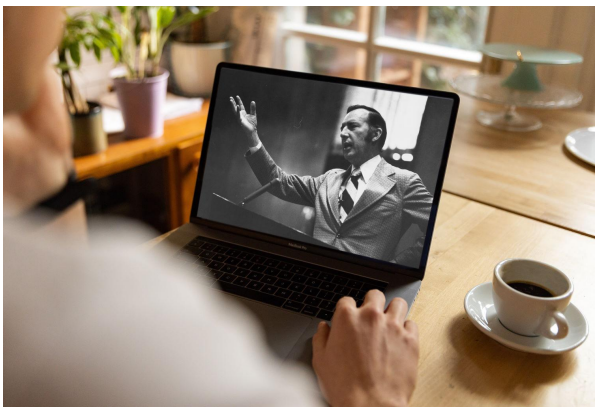

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