

Sermon presented to Tampa Presbyterian Church 02/20/2011

Text: Acts 1:1-8

Title: *“Prepared to witness for Him”*

INTRODUCTION

Yesterday during our time together, it was my intention to explain the specific vision to which God has called us as individuals, leaders, as a ministry, or as a church in general. He has called us by His power from the path we were on or thought we would be, so that we act out His vision, His plan in a specific context.

I also mentioned briefly that for every church, pastor or ministry, the book of Acts is a manual in which God teaches us about the continuity of what Jesus began in the Gospels, to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven. In the book of Acts, we have the story of how the church was started with the apostles and how God provides the power of the Holy Spirit to take the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

On this the last day of our conference, *“Enlarge My Vision”* I just want to impress in our minds and hearts the very important message that our Lord left his disciples and therefore to us to be witnesses for him where ever He calls us to be.

As we know there are a number of important lessons that we could comment on from this text. I want to focus our attention on three points that have to do with missions:

To be His effective witnesses,

I. We need formal Instruction

II. We need the Hope of the Resurrection

III. We need Supernatural Power

I. WE NEED FORMAL INSTRUCTION

As we study the book of Acts, we discover that Dr. Luke wants to explain in detail to Theophilus the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Commentaries say that Theophilus may have been a noble man from that time, wealthy and intellectual. Some pastors think that this man represents those individuals from our societies that have heard of Christianity, have their own concept of it, but are looking for more knowledge in order to believe. In these first few verses of chapter 1, we can see the importance that as witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus, we receive formal training to be efficient in our work.

In verse 2 we see that before the ascension of Jesus, he spent time with his disciples giving them instructions, teaching them for forty days (v.3). Some of us think that those forty days were like an intensive course emphasizing the important things he had taught them for three years.

1. He taught them that all Scripture is about Him

In Luke 24:44-49 we have evidence of this formal teaching. As they prepared to witness effectively of the gospel, they should know that the Law, the Prophets and Psalms teach of one central person, the Son of God and his work. Jesus has taught them Bible, Theology and Practical Ministry for three years (I call this formal instruction). Now, during the forty days of intensive training that they get according to Luke, puts Jesus at the center of everything he has taught them.

This type of teaching is what we know today as Christ centered preaching. It is very important for all of us taking the same message, to have this instruction very clear in our minds. That all of Scripture speaks of Jesus. We need to know that when we are teaching of David in the Old Testament, we shouldn't give a moralistic message and tell people that we need to be brave and strong like the great king David and that way we'll beat our giants, but we should teach about the King that David points to, Jesus the King, who would be who would fight for us and save us from the biggest battle of humanity, the battle against sin.

This should be the objective for our Sunday school classes, Seminaries, Biblical Institutes, to enable us and equip us to expose the central message of the Bible, Jesus Christ.

Illustration: I know this country has been blessed with great institutions of Theological teaching, where pastors, missionaries, and lay people have been trained for generations. Institutions that have taught in this direction. I myself had the blessing to attend one. I thank God that in Mexico we are slowly obtaining more of this gospel centered teaching. Currently, the ITEM is the academic branch of the parachurch organization Mission to the World and is providing courses for pastors (Presbyteries) and lay people and in this way instructs them to reach a new generation of Mexicans that are in need not of moralistic sermons, not of traditional religion or charismatic experiences, but in need of the same thing the disciples received intensively in those forty days, that all of Scripture speaks of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ and His work.

All Instruction that we give or receive should: 1) Expose the passage 2) Exalt Christ 3) Apply Christ in our lives.

II. WE NEED THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

Luke tells us that another thing that Jesus did before ascending to Heaven was to come before his disciples and give them many convincing proofs that He was alive.

(This section is adapted from a Bible study in the book of acts by Dr. Tim Keller)

1. What convincing proofs does Luke refer to?
2. Why were they necessary?
3. What are some objections to these proofs?

1. *What convincing proof does Luke refer to?*

- *Matthew 28:9-10 The women saw him outside the grave on the day of the resurrection and hugged his feet.
- *Luke 24:13 The men on the road to Emmaus (he ate with them)
- *Luke 24:36 The eleven disciples that were gathered together saw him (he ate a broiled fish, he asked them to touch him, he showed them his hands and feet)
- *John 21: To the disciples at the Sea of Galilee
- *1 Corinthians 15:6 To more than five hundred people, etc.

What Luke is saying is that Jesus appeared countless times during forty days. In flesh and bone, with the marks of the crucifixion, eating solids, drinking liquids. ;The resurrection was real!

2. *Why was it necessary for it to happen this way?*

*It's incredible how incredulous we can be as human beings. Instructions from our parents:

- Behave or there will be a punishment
- If you study you will pass your exam
- Don't be late, something bad could happen to you

When there is something to learn or believe in our lives we don't always believe until we see it with our own eyes or experience the consequences. The disciples needed to see over and over again that Jesus is who he said he was. He fulfilled what he had promised in resurrecting in flesh and bone, demonstrating that He is the Son of God. Changing completely the system of beliefs that the disciples had until then. They needed convincing proofs in order to effectively and boldly witness to all the nations.

3. *Objections of the resurrection*

1. *"The followers of Jesus wanted to believe that Jesus had risen and so they thought he did"*
2. *"Some opportunists said that Jesus had risen to continue with the movement that they had started"*

Pastor T. Keller quotes a writer named N.T. Wright in his book *"The resurrection of the Son of God"* that says:

"Fifty years before Jesus and fifty years after him there was a great messianic movement. A person would rise up as a leader and say he was the Messiah:

- *They killed most of them because they were dangerous politically speaking
- *None of the followers of these leaders thought that their leader would rise from the dead

If someone in the first century affirmed something like the resurrection of their leader only for the reasons mentioned above (1 and 2) nobody would believe them." (the Jews believed in the resurrection at the end of times)

But the resurrection of Christ was:

- Unanimous
- From one day to another
- Hundreds saw Jesus incarnate

What has made Christians through out time in history not be afraid of difficult situations when they witness?

E.g.

*The persecution and removing from their lands done to indigenous Christians in San Juan Chamula, Mexico in the 80s and 90s.

*Jim Elliot, Steve Saint missionaries in Ecuador

They were not afraid to die, why?

The meaning of the resurrection for these and other thousands of people has been fundamental for the way they see life. They know that Jesus died and rose again for them and that is sufficient proof of how they will too be resurrected and renewed one day even if they die or suffer in this world. (1 Thessalonians 4:14 “*We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep*”)

To witness effectively we need the hope of the resurrection.

III. WE NEED SUPERNATURAL POWER

(v.8) “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*”

1. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He comes to the believers heart, convinces him of the sinful state he’s in and completely transforms his understanding of life and teaches him the calling he has. (External, supernatural)

2. What does he do?

*Makes us see God in a completely different way from what I have known (in an overwhelming sense)

*Makes us forget our own ambitions and comforts

*Urges us to witness

*There is effectiveness in proclaiming the gospel

*That power enables us to do things that we thought we could never do and discover gifts in my own person that I didn’t think I had.

CONCLUSION

1. God is teaching us week by week as we study Scripture to be ready to be His witnesses

2. We have the hope of the resurrection and even when the world is upside down, we must continue to be witness of the Gospel, because we know that in the end everything will be renewed in Jesus Christ.

3. Let’s receive the message of the gospel in our lives. Let’s be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and take this message from Tampa to the ends of the earth.

