

# The Ministry of Witness

by Paris Reidhead

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*The ministry of witness is the call to follow Christ and to be witnesses unto Him, empowered by the Holy Spirit to tell what we've seen and heard and experienced.*

**Duration:** 35:26

**Scripture:** Isaiah 43:18-19, Isaiah 43:21-22, Ezekiel 36:27, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8

**Topics:** "Witness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a witness for Christ. He explains that being a witness does not necessarily mean talking to everyone you meet, but rather walking in the Spirit and allowing God to create opportunities for you to speak. The speaker highlights the significance of recognizing our own sinfulness and the holiness of God, as well as accepting Jesus as our Savior. He also mentions the promise of the Holy Spirit and how it enables believers to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

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## Transcript

Member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, who moved upon men of old to write, has watched over and preserved those writings, brought them down to us today, exact as exact as they need to be to accomplish that purpose, and that he is here in us and with us to open that word to our hearts, to cause us to apply it to our lives, to understand it, to obey it. We're asking, therefore, Father, that this will be a time when we're not just meeting with one another about Thee, but Thou art meeting with each of us. Find us where we are, minister to us, and accomplish Thy good purpose, because we ask it in the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. In Acts, the first chapter, in the eighth verse, we are told that after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you shall be witnesses unto me. This is not the first time that the word witness is introduced, and it's imperative that we should understand it.

We should understand that in the past, God has had witness, and he was troubled by their ineffectiveness. Turn, if you will, to Isaiah chapter 43. Isaiah 43.

I want to begin with the 18th verse. Possibly, we'll pick up one or two other verses. Isaiah chapter 43.

You know, the context of any text is everything that's gone before, and everything that follows after. And the 43rd chapter of Isaiah is kind of a watershed chapter in many respects. God has spoken to Israel here in this portion of scripture, and he has told them that they have been his witnesses.

But you will find in the latter part of this 43rd chapter that God is very weary with his people, Israel, a people whom he formed for his praise, a people that he wanted to be his witness. But as he said in the 22nd verse, thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Well, let's see what he said in verse 18.

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it shall spring forth, shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, and the beasts of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls.

Because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to give drink to my people, my chosen, this people have I formed for myself. They shall show forth my praise. What's he talking about? In effect, he's saying to Israel, look, you've gone after the gods of the land.

You've worshipped at the shrines of the idols of the people. And I'm through with you. I'm finished with you.

I'm going to do a new thing. Owls were unclean. Cormorants, unclean.

Dragons, lizards, unclean. Forbidden to Israel. Now, said God, he's going to bring water in the wilderness, streams in the desert.

And those which have been called by Israel the unclean, unclean nations, unclean people, are going to drink of that water. And they're going to become a people who will show forth his praise. That's what he said.

Now, if you'll go over to Ezekiel, the thirty-sixth chapter and the twenty-fifth verse, you'll find that he has something else to say about how this is to be accomplished. In Ezekiel chapter thirty-six and verse twenty-five, verse twenty-four, I'll take you from among the heathen and gather you out of all the countries and will bring you into your own land. And then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. The truth and testimony is this. God selected Abraham and then his son Isaac and his son Jacob and the sons of Jacob to form a nation that he called, in due course, Israel.

And that nation was given very specific instructions as to how they should live and walk and work and dress and all the prescriptions that were made, all the requirements that were imposed, all the duties that were asked for, were for the one purpose that Israel should be a witness for God among the nations of the time. But you know what the course of history was. After the marvelous deliverance by power from Egypt, they still rebelled against God and so 40 years were wasted as they wandered around in the wilderness waiting for a generation to die.

It wasn't long after they'd come in the land that we found the testimony that Israel worshiped the Lord and served the gods of the land. Worshiped the Lord, oh yes, they continued to work, but they served the gods of the land. Baal and Ashtoreth and Melech or Molech, the god of power and place.

And so it was that God had to judge them again and again and again and still again and yet again. And they always said, we're the people of God, we're the children of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and they're our fathers and we have the promises. And in Isaiah 43 God said, now wait a minute, I think you'd better understand that whereas I've chosen you and I've blessed you, don't go back to the old things, don't remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

Behold I'm going to do a new thing. I'm going to do something totally new. Well it didn't happen in the time of Isaiah and it didn't happen in the time of Ezekiel, but it happened 400 years after the conclusion of the writing of Malachi, we find that the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son.

And that in the fullness of time, the son having accomplished the purpose for his coming into death and his burial and resurrection, has made promise to those who were with him that the Holy Ghost would come upon them. And so it was that 40 days after his ascension, they were in the upper room and the Spirit of God did come upon them, covering, clothing, immersing, submerging, anointing this people. And the promise of Christ was, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, ye shall be witnesses unto me.

So what is happening now in the upper room? The promise made through Isaiah is being fulfilled. God's new thing, God's new covenant, God's new witness. What was the problem with the old witness? Well, you'll remember how it was, they had a tabernacle.

The tabernacle consisted of a courtyard in which was a building, 15 feet roughly by 45 feet, divided into two rooms, the inner room 15 feet square, and the outer about 15 by 30. And in the innermost place was the holy place where God dwelt between the wings of the cherubim. There was a pillar of fire by night, and a pillar of cloud by day.

But you that have traveled in that little piece of real estate known as the Holy Land, realize that it's very, very hilly. And if you go a few miles in any direction, you're going to find it very difficult to see anything anywhere that you left behind. You go over a hill, well, if that pillar of cloud were to be there, it'd have to be up there somewhere around the Polaris, the North Star, because they're down on the off side of a mountain.

So what happened? The tabernacle was too far away. Back there at Jerusalem or Mount Moriah, or wherever it happened to be located, here was the tabernacle and the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. But over there, in what we now call the Golan Heights, where Ephraim and Manasseh dwelt, and then down to the south and elsewhere, they couldn't see it.

God was so far from them. What did they have? They had commandments. That's what they took with them.

Memorize the Ten Commandments, and they memorized the offerings and the requirements that were imposed. And where are they? Well, they're down there where they're with real problems. Real problems.

They've got to get a crop in. And they aren't such good farmers. They're pretty good at making mud bricks, but they never had a tradition of farming.

And so, and the people whose land they took are still there on the outside, and they're walking along, and an old fellow leans over and says, you know, when I owned this field, I had a better crop than you got. So what do you mean you got a better crop than I got? Well, I just took care of things. What do you mean you took care of things? Come on, I'll show you.

You see that pile of rocks there, that corner in the fence? Yeah. You notice what's on it? Well, it looks like some dark stains, like brown stains on it. What is that? That's where I made the sacrifice to the Spirit that governs this ground.

Now, I took a lamb, and I killed it and put the blood there, and the Spirit was satisfied, and I got a good crop. What do you do? Huh? Yeah, you go in, you plow it, and you till it, and you do everything, but you didn't get a very good crop. What's not half about half what I got the year I had it.

Oh, is that so? Well, now he knows that God told him not to do that, but God's way up there, three mountain ranges away. He can't see that pillar of cloud anymore. It's too far away.

So it just happens that in a couple of days, one of his lambs happens to run into a knife about three times, and he quickly picks the injured lamb up and puts it down there so he can tend it, but the poor lamb dies. Of course, it was all an accident, as far as his wife and family were concerned, but in his heart, he's saying, oh, whoever you are, the Spirit that governs this land, I want you to notice that I've done what they used to do. Now let's get with that crop, huh? Let's get a good crop this year.

So what was it? Oh, they feared the Lord, and they served the gods of the land, because God was too far away. So what did he say through Ezekiel? I'm going to take away the heart of stone, and I'm going to put in a heart of flesh, and I'm going to put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. Previously, he commanded them to walk in his statutes, and they didn't do a very good job at it.

Now he said, I'm going to put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. All the difference in the world. It's a new thing.

It's going to be a new people. Well, here in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, it's the same bunch, isn't it? These are all the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Every one of the 120 there were all Jews.

But it started a new thing. And then you know what happened out there at Joppa when Dorcas dies, and Peter prays for her, and she's raised from the dead. And then the centurion calls for Peter to come, and he goes down there, and he finds out that they've had a witness, and they've had a testimony, and they'd already believed.

And the Spirit of God fell upon them. Because Peter had a vision of a sheet let down from heaven. And what was in it? Owls, and dragons, and lizards, and everything that Israel considered unclean.

And God said, rise, slay, and eat, Peter. And he said, I've never had anything unclean past my lips. And God said, you better do it now.

We're in a new day, Peter. And so Peter went to the house of Cornelius, and the Spirit of God fell. What is he doing? Well, God's letting a stream run into the desert.

And he's picking up a Roman centurion here, and he's picking up some others there, and here, and there, and back, and forth, until he's got this whole new thing going. It even goes up as far as Ephesus. Now, that's going to the bottom of the barrel.

I want you to know that Ephesus was no ocean city Bible conference. I want you to know that was one nasty city. In fact, when you read the description of the social and religious conditions of Ephesus of Paul's time, made from records that are on stone and in papyrus, when you read it, you can't read it in a mixed audience unless you've got an awful lot of gall.

It's bad stuff. They used to drive people out of the city because they didn't commit crimes of incest, and immorality, and sodomy, and bestiality. You are one of us.

Out with you. We won't have anybody here that's going to interfere with our way of life. The very thing you put people in prison for doing in our society, they drove them out of the city or put them to death for not doing in Ephesus, where they worshiped Diana.

A fetid, filthy, poisonous, social swamp. And a few of the people drift out here and there, and they come in contact with the gospel, and they go back home. And then Paul goes and he said, I was night and day from house to house preaching repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

And floating on that filth of Ephesus are beautiful white lilies of the redeemed and the ransomed and the transformed that comprise a church in Ephesus. And Paul in his letter to the Ephesians said, the middle wall of perdition has been broken down and God has taken it both and made one new thing. What did he say to Isaiah? He said, I'm going to do a new thing.

And what's he done? He's made a new thing. And we call it the church, the body of Christ. But what's the secret of it? Ezekiel said, I'll put my spirit within you, and I'll cause you to walk in my statutes.

And what was the promise of Christ? After that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and out of the uttermost part of the earth. Now in Mark, 16th chapter, 15th chapter, you've got these words that say, go into all the world and preach the gospel. And the way it is in the King James Version, it sounds as though go is in the imperative mood.

But there's a commandment, follow me. That's the commandment. Come, follow me.

So if he were to give another commandment to go, it would be a little bit misleading, wouldn't it? And the invitation is to come, and the commandment is to follow. Come, follow me. And so if it were to say now go, it would sound a little bit mixed up.

Because when you really get down to study the word translated go, as though it were the imperative mood, do you know how it comes out? As you are going into all the world, preach the gospel. The imperative is preach. The go is as you are going.

And there's a very real reason for this. Because our command is to follow Christ. Come, that's the invitation.

Rest, follow me. And it's our responsibility as long as we live, whatever our task, is to follow. You see, if go were a commandment, then there would only be a certain number that had the commandment to go.

Those would be the call. And the rest of us could sit diddly-squat all our lives, and once in a while remember to pray for the people that went. But this is no spectator activity.

He said come. He said follow. And the same one who said come, said follow.

And everyone who names the name of Christ has the same obligation to follow Christ. Somebody asked me, weren't you called to Africa? As a missionary, I had to say no. My wife and I were never called to Africa.

We were led to Africa, but we weren't called. We were called to follow Christ. We followed Him to Africa.

But the call was to the person of the Son of God, and not to a place and not to a task. And everyone who names the name of Christ has a call to the person of the Son of God. Does that not mean there are some specially led to go? Yes, it does.

It does indeed mean that there are some who are led to go for special ministries. But it also means that the person that's in business is led. And the doctor is to be led, is to follow Christ.

And the farmer is to be led and follow Christ. And the businessman is to be led and follow Christ. And the teacher is to be led and follow Christ.

And everyone who names the name of Christ is under the same indictment to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Scripture you don't have secular and sacred. You only have people that are called to the person of the Son of God and are commanded to follow Him.

That does away with the spectator aspect of the Christian life. That puts us all right at the front. You have to pray just as much about changing jobs as missionaries do about changing mission fields, or pastors do about changing churches.

Because everything that one who has been born of the Spirit does is important, and nothing is likely to be taken, and everything is to be under the control of the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, he said, you are to be witnesses unto me. You are to be witnesses unto me.

As you are going, preach. No eyewitness. Let's look at it for a moment.

What is it? What's preach? Well, some of us get the idea that preach is a set discourse such as I'm sharing with you this morning. No. That's not the word, preach the gospel.

I'm under another ministry here, and that's teaching. I don't preach like Charles Finney said. I never preach.

I just try to explain what other people preach. And that would be my function, to try to explain it, to illustrate it, to make it applicable in your life. Now, what's a witness? Preach means to have an inner pressure that puts you out.

A good use of the Greek word is when you've got an elevator full of wheat and a spout coming down the side in a boxcar, and you put the spout into the boxcar, and the pressure of the wheat in the elevator preaches the wheat into the boxcar. It's pressure within that pushes out. That's the meaning of the word.

It's similar to witness. So, what is a witness? A witness is someone who tells what he has seen and heard and experienced. And if he goes beyond that, it's hearsay.

And he didn't say you shall be speculators, metaphysicians, or philosophers. He said you'll be witnesses. Now, what have you heard? What have you seen? What have you experienced? Have you heard the Spirit of God by the Word of God speaking to your heart and saying you're under the sentence of death because you've turned your own way? Have you ever heard God speak conviction to you? Like the publican, have you ever been able to say, God be merciful to me, a sinner? Have you ever known you were lost? Well, you have.

And you have something to witness to, don't you? To witness the purity of the law and the authority of the law and the righteousness of the law and the function of the law. The law was a schoolmaster to show us we'd flunked. The law was to bring us to God.

It was that every mouth might be stopped and all the world might become guilty before. Have you ever seen yourself lost? Have you ever seen the holiness of God in the light of His holiness, your own sinfulness? Have you ever seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Well, if so, then you've got something to witness about. Have you ever seen the Lord Jesus Christ, God come in the flesh, revealed in the Word, but revealed to your heart by the Spirit of God? Have you seen Him on the cross, dying in your place instead? Have you opened your heart to receive Him? Have you experienced the witness of the Spirit to your heart, enabling you to cry, Abba, Father? So what are you doing? You're telling what you've seen and heard and experienced.

Now that's witness. And when you go beyond that, you've gone into metaphysics, you've gone into philosophy, you've gone into speculation. Did you know that you are the world's greatest expert on you? There isn't anybody in the universe that can contradict what you say you've heard, seen, and experienced.

You are the world's greatest expert. When I was a boy, a youngster, we had a radio program. Many of you may remember it, but most of you won't.

It was Baron Munchausen who told the most fantastic yarns and lies and fables, all in the name of truth. And he had a straight man whose name was Charlie. And after a while, Charlie couldn't take it.

He said, oh, Baron, Baron, that's too much, that's too much. And the Baron would say, was you there, Charlie? No, I wasn't there. And then he would carry on right where he was.

Because the Baron recognized that he was the world's greatest authority on him. So with you. There isn't anybody in the universe that can contradict what you've seen and heard and experienced.

And as long as you're a witness, you aren't going to get into arguments. Because no one can argue with what you've seen and you've heard and you've experienced. And he said, you'll be witnesses unto me.

No, obviously, if you testify that God has changed your life, then the proof of it is a changed life. And if you testify that God's given you a new heart, the proof of it's a new heart. And he said, by their fruit ye shall know them.

And he said, let your men see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. So there's also the witness of a changed life. But as far as what's taken place, he said, ye shall be witnesses unto me.

Meaning that when the Holy Spirit resides in you, having filled you and covered you and clothed you with himself, the automatic effect is going to be that you'll have something to share. Simple, direct. This I have seen, this I have heard, this I have experienced.

Don't give the philosophy of salvation, don't give the metaphysics of it, don't give the history of it. Just what you've seen and you've heard and you've experienced, that's witnessing for Christ. Now, in closing, he wants you to understand that wherever you go, you are to be a witness.

Now does that mean you have to talk to everyone you meet? No. No. You see, the Lord Jesus didn't.

And because he didn't, he doesn't expect you to. What does he expect you to do? He expects you to walk in the Spirit and so fulfill the law of Christ. And if you're walking in the Spirit, when there is an opportunity to speak, he is going to make it so natural.

So natural. And if you please, he's going to make it so easy. It's going to flow.

So the issue isn't, how can I get up nerve enough to speak to somebody about the Lord? That's not the issue at all. The issue is to make certain that you're walking in the fullness of the Spirit. F.B. Meyer, the great English preacher, came to the marvelous man of God, Evan Roberts, who was used to bring the revival to Wales.

Evan Roberts was in his late eighties. F.B. Meyer was just in his early forties. But all of the preachers of England who were solid in the Word knew and loved Evan Roberts.

And they would meet annually up at Keswick in the Lake Country. And the record is given by Myers himself that on one occasion he went to the aged, godly Evan Roberts and he said, Father, why is it sometimes when I speak it seems to be with power. It seems to be with effect.

Other times it seems so flat and empty. And F.B. Meyer said the milky blue eyes of Evan Roberts that may not remember who had breakfast with him in the morning who was more at home in heaven than he was on earth reached out and put his hand on the shoulder of the younger man F.B. Myers and he said, My son, it's because you breathe out twice when you've only breathed in once. And he turned and walked away.

And Evan Roberts and F.B. Meyer knew what he meant. Roberts was saying this, If you're to walk in the Spirit, then there's got to be a time of worship alone when you're in-breathing of His life. Simpson put it another way.

He said we go into the presence of God in worship alone with Him and we in-breathe of His life. And we go out among the people and we out-breathe in witness. And the old Evan Roberts said, You can't breathe out twice if you've only breathed in once.

So witnessing ministry of the Spirit-filled believer is a ministry that depends upon our worship alone in the secret place in-breathing of His life in worship out-breathing in witness. God's new thing, a people filled with the Spirit, new hearts cause them to walk in His statutes to out-breathe in witness. Are we in the heart of the new thing or on the fringes of it? That's the question for us this morning.

Father Jesus, Thou didst so long have desire for a people, a nation, a holy nation, a peculiar people that would show forth Thy praise. Oh, that we might be that people. That there might be in us such a life

in-breathing in worship and out-breathing in witness that people will indeed take note that we've been with Jesus.

To that end, bless, we pray Thee, every ministry of this company of believers meeting here in this fellowship, that we in turn might be a blessing to others and to glory to the name of Christ, in whose name we ask it. Amen.

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