

Present-Day Witnesses to the Resurrection

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Samuel Logan Brengle's sermon emphasizes the importance of being living witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus through personal experience and the transformative power of faith.

Scripture: Matthew 25:23, Luke 19:8, John 11:25, John 16:14, John 17:3, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Colossians 1:27, Hebrews 6:5, Hebrews 10:23, Hebrews 10:36-37

Topics: "Personal Relationship with Christ", "Witnessing"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the necessity of being present-day witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, sharing the story of a young woman who, despite never having seen Jesus, felt His presence and committed her life to Him as a missionary. He argues that historical evidence alone is insufficient for true faith; rather, it requires a personal, transformative experience with the living Christ. Brengle highlights that this kind of faith purifies the heart and empowers believers to live out their faith authentically, making them effective witnesses in a world still plagued by sin and unbelief. He encourages Christians to seek a deep, personal relationship with Jesus, which is essential for both their own salvation and for effectively witnessing to others. Ultimately, he calls for believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit to truly know and testify about the living Christ.

Transcript

Several years ago, I knelt in prayer with a young woman who wanted to be holy. I asked her if she would give up everything for Jesus. She answered that she would. I then thought I would put a hard test to her, and asked her if she would be willing to go to Africa as a missionary for Jesus. She said, "Yes." Then we prayed, and while we were praying, she burst into tears and cried out, "O Jesus!"

She had never seen Jesus. She had never heard His voice, and before this hour she had no more idea of such a revelation of Jesus to her soul than a man born blind has of a rainbow. But she knew Him! She had no more need that some one should tell her this was Jesus than you have need of the light of a tallow candle to see the sun come up. The sun brings its own light, and so did Jesus.

She knew Him, she loved Him, she rejoiced in Him with "joy unspeakable and full of glory"; and from that hour she testified of Him and followed Him -- followed Him to Africa, to help Him win the heathen to Himself; till one day He said to her, "Well done, good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 23), and then she went up to Heaven, to behold with open vision His unveiled glory.

This young woman was a witness for Jesus -- a witness that He is not dead but living, and as such was a witness to His resurrection.

Such witnesses are needed in every age. They are needed today as much as in the days of the Apostles. Men's hearts are just as wicked, their pride just as stubborn, their selfishness is just as universal, and their unbelief is just as obstinate as at any time in the world's history, and it takes just as powerful evidence to subdue their hearts and beget in them living faith as it ever did.

There are two kinds of evidence, each of which seems to be necessary to get men to accept the truth and be saved. They are: the evidence we get from history, and the evidence we get from living men who tell about that of which they are conscious.

In the Bible and in the writings of early Christians, we have the historical evidences of God's plans for men and His dealings with them; of the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit. But these records alone do not seem sufficient to destroy the unbelief of men and bring them into humble, glad submission to God, and into childlike faith in His dear love. They may produce an historical faith. That is, men may believe what they say about God, about men, about sin, life, death, judgment, Heaven and Hell, just as they believe what history says about Julius Caesar, Bonaparte or Washington; and this faith may lead men to be very religious, to build temples, to deny themselves, and go through many forms of worship; to forsake gross outward sin and to live lives of decorum and morality, and yet leave them dead to God. It does not lead them into that living union with the Lord Jesus which slays inward and outward sin, and takes away the fear of death, and fills the heart with joyful hope of immortality.

The faith that saves, is the faith that brings the life and power of God into the soul -- a faith that makes the proud man humble, the impatient man patient, the haughty man lowly in heart, the stingy man openhanded and liberal, the lustful man clean and chaste, the fighting, quarrelsome man meek and gentle, the liar truthful, the thief honest, the light and foolish sober and grave, a faith that purifies the heart, that sets the Lord always before the eyes, and fills the soul with humble, holy, patient love toward God and man.

To beget this faith, is needed not only the Bible, with its historical evidences, but also a living witness; one who has "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come" (Heb. vi. 5); one who knows that Jesus is not dead, but alive; one who can witness to the resurrection, because he is acquainted with the Lord who was resurrected, and knows the Lord, who is "the Resurrection and the Life" (John xi. 25).

I remember a little girl in Boston, whose quiet, earnest testimony for Jesus drew people to our meetings just to hear her speak. One day, as we were walking along the street, she said to me: "The other evening, as I was in my room getting ready for the meeting, Jesus was with me. I felt He was there, and I knew Him."

I replied, "We may be more conscious of His presence than of any earthly friend."

Then, to my surprise and joy, she said, "Yes, for He is in our hearts."

Paul had to be such a witness, in order to bring salvation to the Gentiles. He was not a witness of the resurrection, in the lower sense, that he saw Jesus in the body with his natural eyes; but in the higher, spiritual sense, in that he had the Son of God "revealed" in him -- (Gal. i. 16) -- and his testimony was just

as mighty in convincing men of the truth and slaying their unbelief; as was that of Peter or John.

And this power to so witness was not confined to the Apostles, who had been with Jesus, and to Paul, who was specially chosen to be an Apostle, but is the common heritage of believers. Many years after Pentecost, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, away off in Europe, "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). And, in writing to the Colossians about the mystery of the Gospel, he said it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. i. 27). In fact, this is the very highest purpose for which Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost. He said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come ... He shall not speak of Himself ... He shall testify of Me. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John xvi. 14).

This is His chief work -- to reveal Jesus to the spiritual consciousness of each individual believer, and by so doing to purify his heart, to destroy all evil dispositions, and to implant in the soul of the believer the very tempers and dispositions of Jesus Himself.

Indeed, the inward revelation of the mind and heart of Jesus, through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, was necessary in order to make fit witnesses out of the very men who had been with Him for three years and who were eye-witnesses of His death and resurrection.

He did not rise from the dead and send them out at once to tell the fact to every one they met. He remained with them a few days, teaching them certain things, and then, just before He ascended to Heaven, instead of saying to them, "You have been with Me for three years, you know My life, you have heard My teachings, you saw Me die, you witnessed My resurrection -- now go into all the world, and tell them about these things," we read that He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence ... ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts i. 4, 5, 8).

They had been with Him for three years, but they did not understand Him. He had been revealed to them in flesh and blood, but now He was to be revealed in them by the Spirit; and in that hour they knew His divinity, and understood His character, His mission, His holiness, His everlasting love and His saving power as they otherwise could not had He lived with them in the flesh to all eternity. This it was that led Jesus to say to them, just before His death, "It is expedient (better) for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you" (John xvi. 7); and if the Comforter had not come, they could not possibly have known Jesus except in the flesh.

Oh, how tenderly Jesus loved them, and with what unutterable longings did He wish to make Himself fully known to them! Just so, today, does He want to make Himself fully known to His people, and to reveal Himself in their hearts.

It is this knowledge of Jesus that sinners demand Christians shall have before they believe.

Now, if it is true that the children of God can so know Christ, that the Holy Ghost does so reveal Him, that Jesus does so earnestly wish to be known by His people, and that sinners demand that Christians shall have such knowledge before they will believe, is it not the duty of every follower of Jesus to seek Him with the whole heart, till he is filled with this knowledge and this power to so witness? Further, this knowledge should be sought, not simply for usefulness, but for personal comfort and safety, because it is salvation -- it is eternal life. Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus

Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

One may know ten thousand things about the Lord, may be very eloquent in speaking about His character and His works, and yet be utterly destitute of any heart-acquaintance with Him. A peasant may know many things about an earthly ruler -- may believe in his justice, and be ready to trust his clemency, though he has never seen him; but it is his son and daughter and the members of his household who really know him. This universal revelation of the Lord Jesus is more than conversion -- it is the positive side of that experience which we call a "clean heart" or "holiness."

Do you want to know Him in this way? If your whole soul desires it, you may.

First, be sure your sins are forgiven. If you have wronged anybody, undo the wrong so far as you can. Zacchaeus said to Jesus, "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke xix. 8), and Jesus saved him right on the spot. Submit to God, confess your sins, then trust Jesus, and as sure as you live all your sins shall be forgiven, and He will blot out all your transgressions as a thick cloud, "and remember them no more."

Second, now that you are forgiven, come to Him with your will, your affection, your very self, and ask Him to cleanse you from every evil temper, from every selfish wish, from every secret doubt, and to come and dwell in your heart and keep you pure, and use you for His own glory. Then struggle no more, but walk in the light He gives you, and patiently, expectantly trust Him to answer your prayer, and as sure as you live you shall soon "be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. iii. 19). Just at this point, do not become impatient and yield to secret doubts and fears, but "hold fast the profession of your faith" (Heb. x. 23); for, as Paul says, "Ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise; for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 36, 37). God will come to you! He will! And when He comes, He will satisfy the uttermost longings of your heart.

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