

A Well Pleasing Witness

After reading this week's essay, my thought train was derailed again. I actually thought I had a topic lined up for a lesson this week from a thought I had last Sabbath. I even took a couple of notes from Isaiah 6:8 but it will have to wait for a later offering. Go figure.

In reading 2 Corinthians 5:9-11, our labors are to be well pleasing to Him. God does not want us out there on a street corner or in a parking lot handing out pamphlets drawing attention to ourselves. It is not a numbers game. He knows our motives for everything we do. Are there things we can be doing to become a better witness? You bet.

2 Corinthians 5:9-11- “Because of this, we are also laboring *so that*, whether present or absent, *we* may be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive according to the things *done in his* body—what he has practiced, whether good or evil. So then, *because* we know the fear of the Lord, we are persuading men; but we are fully known to God, and I hope are also fully known in your consciences.” Remember, God knows our hearts.

There is so much more to pleasing God than “doing.” We so often equate “doing” with “things” rather than substance, quantity rather than quality. It is just part of our human make up. I remember the Pentecostal church we used to attend would always take attendance (as most churches do). Even further, they would do a count after an “alter call” to see how many people were “saved” that day. The same mind set existed on the missions trips I did to Costa Rica years ago. They would have alter calls at the end of the week’s training to get a “body count” to see how many came to Christ. Matthew 23:15 sure comes to mind. If I have a bigger stack of boxes maybe God will notice I did more work? Throwing your arm out of socket to get God to notice you may get you the kind of attention you do not want. Sorry, body counts, boxes, or books, it does not work that way. Doing things out of the flesh will profit nothing.

Matthew 23:5-6- “And they do all their works to be seen by men. They make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments; And they love the first place at the suppers, and the chief seats in the synagogues,”

So many people confuse this work of pleasing God to witnessing to the unbeliever. They think it falls upon them to “help” others change their destination from hell to heaven. But isn’t this what the Great Commission tells us to do?

Matthew 28:19-20- “Therefore, go and make disciples in all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even until the completion of the age.” Amen.”

But if you read the scripture closely, “go and make disciples” stands out and stands alone. Who is Christ sending out? What is He sending them out to do? Christ is sending His Disciples out to teach the followers to become *more* disciples. They are going out to train the trainers. We tend to get so wrapped around the axle on the marching orders we miss the instructions. That is why saying a “sinner’s prayer” and having a Bible does not make you a Christian any more than having a NASA patch makes you an astronaut.

We are not to cast our pearls before swine.

Matthew 7:6- “Do not give that which *is* holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn around and tear you in pieces.” Spewing lines of scripture to an unbeliever in a parking lot makes as much sense as a solar powered flashlight...

It is quite understandable how someone who is new to the church and to the Body of Christ can be over zealous to the joy they have found and so desire to share it with family and friends. But all too often they end up alienating themselves from their former relatives and acquaintances. They so much want to share this new found joy, they will shoot their mouth off without having their brain loaded. An improper knowledge of scripture can lead to a blank stare and unanswered questions and chewing on one's own shoe.

Has anyone had any success as a new witness? There are some limited exceptions but what was it that drew someone into a conversation? Did you ask them if they kept the Sabbath? Or perhaps over time they saw a change in you? Therein lies the key that so many miss. God wants *us to change*. He wants His light in us to so shine that it draws others.

Matthew 5:16- "In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven."

These good works will fall in line and be well pleasing to God in time with your spiritual growth. It takes work. The character building essential for becoming that good witness can be found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Just as a

reminder, I have listed Matthew 5:3-12, but I honestly recommend frequent reading of chapters 5 through 7 as it so exemplifies the mind of Christ.

Matthew 5:3-12-

3. “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5. Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6. Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

7. Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy.

8. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9. Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God.

10. Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake.

12. Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven; for in this same manner they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you.

Character building into the image of Christ will enhance any witness abilities we hope to develop. Spending time with God on the Sabbath in prayer and study will yield more of His Spirit within us.

Just take a look back at the Old Testament for a minute. How many of the prophets were sent out to “evangelize” or “convert” gentile nations other than Jonah or Daniel? Most had limited contact and did not actively seek to persuade any other nation. God made His covenant with the Nation of Israel (**1 Chronicles 16:17**) and dealt with the other nations when they came into contact with them.

Nowhere in God’s Word did He command them to go out and make disciples of the other nations in the Old Testament. It was God’s desire for others to be attracted to the abundant blessings bestowed upon the “obedient” nation of Israel and their example. We clearly see from history how well that worked out. Is it any

wonder why the church is in the shape it is in today? What kind of examples in the church do we have to show the world today?

This might be a difficult concept to grasp and maybe one of those “Divine oxymorons” but the Bible is a book for the *whole world* but not for everybody. Let that sink in for a moment. Seriously. Just who is the Bible written for? Just who does it feed? The world? I hardly think so.

Matthew 13:10-11- “And His disciples came to Him and asked, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” And He answered *and* said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”

The world does not understand because it does not have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2:11-14- “For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which *is* in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except *by* the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God; Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in *words* taught by *the* Holy Spirit *in order to* communicate spiritual things by spiritual *means*. But *the* natural man does not receive the things

of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand *them* because they are spiritually discerned.” Speaking scripture to the world is like talking to a cat and think it understands you, unless you are Andrea.

To those who have repented, been baptized, and received the gift of God’s Holy Spirit, we have been given the wisdom and understanding of His word. We are fed constantly from His word and through His Spirit.

1 Peter 5:2 provides a scriptural answer identifying His sheep. “Feed *the flock of God* that is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;”

We can see that God has consistently concentrated His attention on feeding His own.

Ezekiel 34:14-15- “I will feed them in a good pasture, and their fold shall be upon the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture they shall feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down,” says the Lord GOD.”

Jesus commanded Peter three times between John 21:15 and 21:17 to feed and shepherd His sheep. This may seem in contrast to Matthew 28 but it is in support

of their marching orders. They were sent out as a witness and to make new disciples. Certainly, to share the gospel message but with those established churches throughout the known world at that time.

John 8:31-32- “Therefore, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, “If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.”

Ephesians 4:11-13- “And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the body of Christ; Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ;”

They sought the sheep, the flock of God among them.

John 10:27-28- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish *forever*; and no one shall take them out of My hand.”

To the world, the Bible is just a book, a fairy tale, words printed on pages. A book for the foolish who grasp at hope of an invisible God and salvation of a martyred Savior. So, when you try and witness to an uncalled family member or friend, they will not grasp what you are trying to convey. It is better to wait and have someone approach you with a biblical question and you have the ready answer (1 Peter 3:15) than to try and be like a Mormon banging on somebody's door.

The Bible to us is the written Word of God, it is a way of life and the greatest love story ever written. It is a testimony and promise from our Creator of the things to come. Unlike the world, we have this hope and we have this faith. We are His witnesses.

The Bible and its truth are not restricted by any sense of the word. It is open to all those who genuinely seek the truth of God and the salvation of Jesus Christ. But the limitations and requirements are applicable and equal to all who desire God's way of life. There is no in between as so many have "chopped" it up to fit their own narrative.

In the end, all of mankind will be taught from the words of God's Bible and we will be doing the teaching. It is critical for us to know the Bible in its entirety beyond the gospel message. The Bible's instruction is about God's entire purpose

and way of life for mankind. Our preparation and character building are essential now for the effectiveness of our witnessing abilities. Our observable conduct we display will either draw or repel others. Our relationship with God will be reflected in our daily mannerisms that sometimes we may overlook.

Being a well pleasing witness will take our faith, our devotion, and our dedication.

Witnessing is but one part of the many topics in our training schedule in preparation for what lies ahead. All of our training and learning is focused on developing the attitudes, the character and mind of Christ, our relationship with God, preparing for our roles in His Kingdom and being a well pleasing witness for God by our conduct.

Hebrews 13:20-21- “And *may* the God of peace, Who raised our Lord Jesus from among *the* dead—that great Shepherd of the sheep—through *the* blood of *the* everlasting covenant, Perfect you in every good work in order that you may do His will; accomplishing in you that which *is* well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom *be the* glory into the ages of eternity. Amen.”