

HIS TOUCH HAS STILL ITS ANCIENT POWER

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN -

HIS WITNESSES

"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1:8)

WHAT a priceless privilege is ours! We are the witnesses of the King of kings. A witness is one who bears testimony to what he has seen and heard, to what he knows to be the truth. He is not asked to say what he believes, thinks, or feels. The Faithful and the True Witness once said, "**We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness**" (John 3:11).

One of the main purposes of our redemption is that we might tell from our own experience what we have seen and heard, and what we ourselves know of our REDEEMER.

This witnessing means not only public preaching but also individual conversation. The old Anglo-Saxon version of the New Testament says that the early Christians went everywhere "gossiping the Word." To gossip means to talk. Yes, that is what real witnessing is, just talking to other folk - our relations, workmates, friends, and acquaintances - talking to them, gossiping about the Lord JESUS; what He means to us, what He has done for us, and what He can do for others.

Remember, then, our task is not to preach religion, argue about Christianity, or merely to talk about "my experience," but to speak of CHRIST. "**[He] preached unto him Jesus**" (Acts 8:35).

The late Prebendary Carlile brought this home to me in a very forceful manner. He was occupying the chair at a conference on personal evangelism, when a young man rose and said: "I was speaking to a man the other day about his soul when -" Here "the Chief" broke in: "Excuse me, young man, but I am an old hand at this game, may I give you a word of advice? Never waste time talking to a man about his soul, talk to him about JESUS - it carries much more weight. All right, now you can go on."

But did I hear someone say: "I do not agree with all this talking about Christianity, I prefer to let my life tell for the MASTER." This sounds well, but as a matter of fact it is very lop-sided, for there are two ways in which we should witness for CHRIST - by LIFE and LIP. The man who talks a lot but whose life is inconsistent is obviously at fault (wasn't it C. H. Spurgeon who said that such a man should walk at least ten miles before standing up to preach, and even then he should sit down again without saying anything?), but so is the man who lives a good life without

testifying for CHRIST, for he often takes the glory to himself; Such dumb witnesses are seldom effective.

John the Baptist was a man sent from GOD and the fourth Gospel tells us that he "**came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light.**" Apart from the miracle of a holy life the Baptist wrought no marvels, but years after he had borne his testimony, when men beyond Jordan heard and saw the SAVIOUR for themselves, they exclaimed: "**John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this Man were true,**" and many believed on Him there (John 10:41). Yes, and a true witness delivereth souls.

When the SAVIOUR Himself was on earth He said: "**As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world**" (John 9:5). But now, having returned to Heaven, he says to you and to me: "**Ye are the light of the world**" (Matthew 5:14). During His ministry here, He Himself bore witness, but now He commissions us to be His witnesses. At noonday the sun in the heavens says: "I am the light of the world," but after the sun has set the moon says: "I am the light of the world," yet the moon has no light of itself and only reflects the light of the sun. So day by day we must reflect the glory of the Lord. On one occasion the Lord spoke of John the Baptist as "**A burning and a shining light**" (John 5:35).

But alas! very often our light is hidden under a bushel - that is, in our business life; or under a bed - that is, in our home life.

Personal evangelism is often nothing short of a thrilling adventure, for we can never tell where a word in season may lead. When John bare witness of Him, and cried saying:

"**This is the Son of GOD . . . Behold the Lamb of GOD!**" Andrew heard him and followed JESUS. Andrew at once became CHRIST's witness, and "**He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him: We have found the Messiah (Christ)... And he brought him to Jesus**" (John 1:41-42). Peter in his turn became a witness, and won thousands of souls for his Lord.

I was preaching one night in Belfast. As often happens when I speak, two trains of thought were running through my mind. I was preaching, but at the same time I was thinking about a sailor who was listening. It wasn't his first visit. I thought I remembered seeing him there before. How earnestly he was listening! I hoped he would remain behind for a chat, but was disappointed to see him file out with the others. I was just making my way down from the platform when I spotted the sailor. He had come back; so I crossed to where he was.

"This isn't your first visit to these meetings," I said.

"No, sir, I've been three times."

"Are you a Christian?" There was a look of despair on his face as he replied,

"No, I'm afraid I'm not. There's no chance for me, I'm far too wicked to be a Christian."

"Are you ever ill, Jack?" I asked.

"I have been."

"You don't go to a doctor, I suppose."

"Of course I do."

"But don't you feel too bad? Don't you wait until you feel a bit better?"

"Of course not, I go to him to get cured. . . . Oh, I see what you're getting at."

I went on to explain that **"They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick."**

Jack told me of his past life. It had been one of sin and degradation, but through it all his godly mother had never ceased to pray that her boy would some day turn from his life of sin and trust the SAVIOUR. "I thought there was no hope for me," he said. "I imagined I had gone too far, then a pal invited me to come to these meetings, and each night I have longed more to be a Christian."

We had a further conversation, and that sailor, who had looked so dejected only half an hour before, walked back to his ship a new creature in CHRIST.

The following night Jack was at the meeting with a radiant face. It had been a difficult day. He had told his friends where he stood, severed his connection with a rum-racket in which he had been involved, and made it clear what he wanted his future life to be. No, it had not been easy, but the Lord is very gracious to the new convert, and had given him great joy.

A few days later Jack came to me terribly upset with tears in his eyes. I thought he must have had a family bereavement. "Mr. Rees," he said, "I've been given a week's leave."

"Well, what is so tragic about that - I thought most Servicemen were thrilled to get leave."

"Yes, but I shall have to go home, and I'll miss the last week of these meetings."

Some weeks later Jack wrote to me (as I write now his letter is beside me), "I want to say how happy I am serving the Lord JESUS. I would not change places with anyone outside of CHRIST. The life of full surrender is the happiest one. By the grace of GOD I have been able to make a clean break with the things of the world. I have joined some out-and-out Christian friends, and I have taken my stand for the Lord in the barracks. I have been invited to a debate, but they say religion is not to be brought into it, so I have decided not to go, as I do not want to go anywhere where I cannot witness for my SAVIOUR. We hope to get a fellowship meeting started. Do pray it may be the means of leading many to the foot of the Cross."

Doreen was a Belfast girl who was led to CHRIST in her early teens. Before she was twenty she married a sailor, Harry Hobson, who was not a Christian. His ship took him away for periods, but one day Doreen received a letter to say that her husband had a shore job at Devonport, and wanted her to go over to him straight away.

The next part of this story is similar to the previous one about Mary Parker, but with a very different ending.

"Come to the pictures, Doreen."

"No, Harry, I'd rather not."

"All right, have it your own way, but I'm going, and you'll be left in alone."

"Don't worry about me; I'll go to the meeting at the Salvation Army hall. I'll be back in time to get your supper."

They went their separate ways. The Salvation Army meeting took the form of a "testimony meeting."

Amongst those speaking was a sailor who said, "I was in Belfast." Doreen pricked up her ears. "While I was there I went to hear a Mr. Tom Rees preach." Doreen thought: "Tom Rees, how many times I have heard my grandmother speak of him, and how he led her to CHRIST a few years ago." The sailor went on, "I had been living a rotten life, but the Lord JESUS saved me, and He has kept me, and helps me to live day by day."

At the end of the meeting Doreen made her way to Jack. "I'm from Belfast," she said, "and I have heard of the Mr. Rees you mention. Won't you come to supper and meet my husband?"

Over supper Jack and Harry became very friendly, and once again Jack gave his witness, telling Harry of all that the Lord had done for him, and had the great joy of leading Doreen's husband to the SAVIOUR.

Harry in his turn became a soul winner. When I met Doreen recently in Belfast she told me that he was helping to arrange Gospel meetings on board his ship.

So the rivers of Living Waters flow on, growing broader and deeper. "Nicodemus" has proved himself not only an earnest soul-winner but an effective speaker, and Jack by his witness continues to increase the number of my spiritual grandchildren.

~ end of chapter 7 ~
