

Evangelism

by Anton Bosch

Effective evangelism requires living the life, being obedient to the scriptures, and being in one accord and one place, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 50:46

Scripture: Acts 6:2

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of each individual finding their calling and gift from God. They explain that when believers fulfill their gifts, it allows others to fulfill theirs, leading to the spread of the word of God. The speaker also highlights the need for consistency and credibility in our lives as witnesses of the gospel. They stress that living a godly and upright life is crucial in attracting others to ask about our hope and opens the door for effective witnessing. Finally, the speaker reminds the audience of their mission and responsibility to preach the gospel not only in their immediate surroundings but also in their city, state, and to the ends of the earth.

Transcript

Turn with me to the book of Corinthians, first letter to the Corinthians chapter 3, 1 Corinthians and chapter 3. And we've been speaking about the church and the life of the church and this evening I want to speak about evangelism, outreach. And don't switch off because this is not the same old stuff you've heard before. This is a different angle which I'm sure you may not have heard before but you may have heard me make references to this at a previous time.

So let's read from 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verses 5 through 17. 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 5. Who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

Now he who plants and he who waters are one and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers, you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds on it, but let each one take heed how he builds on it.

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or straw, each one's work will become clear, for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burnt, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so was through fire. So you, do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. We spoke about that holiness this morning.

Now Micah, keep your marker in 1 Corinthians 3, we'll come back there, I want to go to the book of Acts and begin in Acts chapter 1 and the famous verse 8. These are the last words that Jesus spoke before he ascended on high, and so these have to be very very important words. Acts chapter 1 verse 8, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. You shall be witnesses to me.

Now, what does it mean to be a witness? I think that lots of churches and most evangelical churches and charismatic Pentecostal churches have in the past put a lot of pressure on people to witness, to go out there and to witness in various shapes and forms, whether it's handing out tracts or knocking on doors or those sorts of things, and we say, well that is witnessing. But I think that it's really not the intent of the scripture. First of all, he says that you will be witnesses, not you will witness, but you will be witnesses.

There's a big difference. Somebody who witnesses is someone who gives a verbal declaration of what he had seen in a court of law. Someone who is a witness does not speak with his lips only, but speaks with his life.

And the emphasis that Jesus gives here is that they will be witnesses to him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Now, I don't want you to go away here this evening and say, well, you know, we don't have to do anything. Us four no more.

Let's close the door. We have a mission and a responsibility to preach in Jerusalem, in the valley, in Judea, Los Angeles, in Samaria, California, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. That is our job.

That is our responsibility. But at the same time, we will receive power to be those witnesses. And you've heard me speak many, many times about the fact that what we say and what we do is often two different things.

And the reason why we cannot witness is because our lives deny what we say. You see, one of the things about a witness is that you have to witness to what you have seen or experienced. You can't go to a court and say, I'll witness.

Did you see what happened? No, I didn't see what happened, but I heard somebody tell me that that's what happened. And the court will say, we're not interested. A witness is somebody who has personally seen or experienced what happened.

You cannot be a witness to something you have not seen, and you cannot be a witness to something you have not experienced. And if we have not experienced the power of the gospel in our lives, if it has not transformed us and changed us, if we have not been made new creatures, then how can we witness to something which is not real in our lives? What I mean by this is, if we're still exhibiting the traits and the

characteristics of the unsaved person, envy, lust, anger, greed, all of these things, how can we witness and say, I have good news for you. Jesus can save you.

Jesus can change your life. When the person I'm witnessing to looks at my life and says, but you don't look any different to me. You have the same issues.

What's the use? And so we need to be those witnesses. And I believe that in our responsibility to be witnesses, our first job and task is to live the life. To live the life.

You see, a witness has to be credible. It's no good somebody coming to court and saying, I know what happened. And the judge looks at the guy and he says, but you're crazy.

The guy says, well, you know, I was standing on the corner and this car came down and you know, the cheese, the moon is made of cheese. The judge is going to say, you're not a credible witness. And we want to tell people about the gospel.

And yet, when they look at our lives, they say, but these people are crazy. The way that they conduct their marriages, the way they keep their homes, the way they do their jobs, the way they, everything about them is not credible. It's not consistent.

And so he says, you will receive power after the Holy Spirit, and you will be the power of the Holy Spirit will empower us to be those witnesses. And without the power of the Holy Spirit, empowering us to be those witnesses that people look at and say, I want what he's got. That person is different.

That family is different. You've heard me refer a number of times to the Mormons. Why are the Mormons so attractive to the world? Because they have it together.

Their families are beautiful families. They dress well. They behave well.

They're excellent workers. Everything about them is desirable. Now they do it in the flesh.

They do it because they've learned the legalistic way of doing these things. And why do people not want the Christianity that you and I have? Maybe because what they're seeing in us is really just not that desirable. And so the first thing that we need to do, if we're going to be witnesses, is we need to be sure that we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to live those changed lives.

It has to begin at home. It has to begin in our relationships, in our families and in our relationships in the church and in my own self. That's where it has to be.

There is a lot of competition out there today for all sorts of stuff. You can join Scientology and you can go and watch the Lakers or the Dodgers and you can join the Pottery Club. There are just so many choices.

We need to offer something that's different. And what we have that's different is not the fact that we have a barbecue every Sunday morning after the morning service and we offer the best T-bone steaks. Many churches try that.

They do that. But that's not the book of Acts. The book of Acts was that they had something to offer.

Something that was unique and something that was different and something that people said, we want what those people have. We want the peace they have when they go through hard times. We want to

change lives.

And folk, my prayer is that it will begin in our lives. Now when he says that you will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come and you will be witnesses, we know that this was true of the apostles. They were fearful.

They were locked up in that upper room. And suddenly when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they began to speak. And Peter began to preach and 3,000 people were saved as a result.

But I want you to see how the Holy Spirit came upon them. Now I don't want to do a whole teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We need to do that.

That's a separate thing. But one of the problems here is that too many people say, I'm baptized with the Holy Spirit. I'm filled with the Holy Spirit.

But in fact, where's the power? Oh, but I speak in tongues. And you've heard me say before, I'm not interested in whether you speak in tongues. I want to see a changed life.

I want to see the evidence of being born again before you tell me that you're filled with the Holy Spirit. Remember donkey also spoke in tongues. He did.

Spoke a language he never learned. Was the donkey anointed? Was he filled with the Spirit? Was he born again? No, he was just a stupid Buddha. But he could speak in tongues.

Folks, it's no, let me say this and I say this reverently and with respect. It's no big deal speaking in tongues. It's a big deal when my life is changed by the power of the gospel.

And when my life evidences that change and the baptism of the Holy Spirit has been cheapened in the last 30 years into something which we can just dispense, come and line up in front here. Boom, boom, boom, boom. Everybody fall over.

Everybody's filled with the Holy Spirit. And it's been changed into something which, which it doesn't matter what your life is. You can, you can be an alcoholic and you can abuse your wife and shouted your kids and you can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

But I want you to see a different angle to all of these things this evening. And the, the, if you, if you look at what happened to these, these, these, um, these men in the upper room, it wasn't just the apostles, but the, the 120. First of all in verse 15, and I know made reference to some of these things in the last few weeks, but I want to pull it all together in one place.

So verse 15, and in those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples. Altogether, the number of the names was 120 and said men and brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which spoke, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. And then he says for verse 20, it is written in the book of Psalms, let his dwelling place be desolate and let no one live in it and let another take his office.

And then they selected Matthias to take the place of Judas. Now, I think that this is important because what it is telling us is that in those 10 days, remember those who were in the adult Bible class this morning, 40 days after the cross, Jesus was raised, 50 days, the day of Pentecost. So for 10 days, they were in the upper room.

One of the things that they did in the upper room during that time was they went through the scriptures. They may not have had the scriptures physically, but they had the scriptures in their minds. And in this process, Peter goes through the scriptures and he says, oh, but the scripture says that we were supposed to appoint somebody else in the place of Judas.

And he appoints, they appoint then Matthias in the place of Judas. Now it says that verse 26, they cast their lots and the lots fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the 11 apostles. When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as a sound of a rushing mighty wind. We know the rest of that. The baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon them, I believe, as a consequence, not as a consequence, but there were two things that were necessary for them to bring in order before the Holy Spirit fell.

The first was they had to be obedient to the scriptures. Because you'll see that the verse 26 of chapter 1 says that they appointed Matthias and then in chapter 2 says the Holy Spirit came. I do not believe that we can claim to be filled or to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit if we are living in disobedience to the word of God.

I do not believe that the Holy Spirit would have fell on these men if they knew they were supposed to appoint someone in the place of Judas and they refused to do that. But they were obedient to the scriptures and it gives us 15 through 26, 11 verses. There's a lot of verses to explain the detail in which they were obedient to the scriptures.

And then the other point which we've emphasized lately is that they were in one accord in one place. Those two things. And when that happened, the time was ready for the Holy Spirit to come.

Now, we have been taught, when I say we, I think most of us have been taught that the Holy Spirit is a gift and God just gives it, doesn't matter what your life looks like. And it's not a reward. And it is not a reward.

But at the same time, he does not give his spirit to those who and who should not be containing the Holy Spirit. Remember, Jesus says a house divided between against itself cannot stand. Go with me.

Keep your finger here because I'm going to come back here to John chapter 14. John 14. Jesus is speaking.

This is possibly in the upper room just immediately before his crucifixion. And verse 15, John 14 verse 15. If you love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father and he will give you another helper that he may abide with you forever. The spirit of truth in the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he dwells with you and he will be in you.

I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you. There's a lot in those verses.

But I just want you to see verse 15. If you love me, keep my commandments. And then the next verse begins with what? And.

And. In other words, these two things are connected. I'm sure we've all understood that from school.

The word and is a connecting word. It connects two things together. And he is.

But the problem is when we read the Bible, we don't apply normal English. We somehow. I don't know what happens.

But if you love me, keep my commandments and I will pray the father. And he will give you another helper. Can you see the connection? Jesus saying, love me, keep my commandments and I will send the spirit.

Not live godless, careless lives, and I'll fill you with the spirit. No, love me, keep my commandments and I will give you the spirit. Now I've never heard that ever taught, but there it is.

It's clear as the nose on your face. Love me, keep my commandments and I will pray the father to give the spirit. In other words, if you don't keep my commandments, I'm not going to ask the father to give you the spirit.

It's as simple as that. You see, but we overemphasize the verse that says, if you who are earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? So all we have to do is ask and he's going to give us the spirit. Now that's not what Jesus said here.

Here Jesus says, love him, keep his commandments and he will give us the spirit. And that's exactly what they did in the book of Acts. They loved him, they kept his commandments, they fixed the things that were lacking amongst them, appointed Matthias and he gave them the Holy Spirit.

Now we wonder why the world has not been revolutionized by so many people who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit in the last 30 or 40 years since the Jesus revolution. We've had all of these revivals, Toronto, Pensacola, Holy Trinity Brompton in England, London, on and on and on and on. Thousands and thousands of people slain in the spirit, filled with Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, shaking, doing all sorts of strange things, laughing.

And yet it's made no impact on the world. The world is less Christian today than it was 30 years ago. The churches are running empty.

So what was it all about? Was it the real thing? I don't know if you add up all the people who claim to be baptized with the Holy Spirit in the last 30 years, but it's certainly many, many more times than 120. And so the impact must have been much bigger than the impact of these 120. And yet the impact has been nothing on the world.

And you can go to every one of these places where there were these supposed major revivals. Go to Brownsville. In fact, I don't want to tell you the sad story of Brownsville.

Pensacola, where there was this great move of God apparently. Crime rate went down, they said. In fact, the crime rate went up.

The church has been shattered. Many of the leaders have been exposed as frauds and thieves. God help us.

No wonder the world look at us and they say, we don't want part of that. We have a tremendous responsibility and we have a huge task. Because we don't just have the job that these people had and that was to present an alternative to Judaism.

We have to undo all of the mess that everybody else has done and that we have been part of in the last 30 years and the last 100 years before we even have a basis to begin to be a witness to Christ. And so we have a tremendous responsibility to not only be good Christians, we have to be excellent. We have to be above reproach because we have to undo all of the baggage and all of the prejudice that people have.

And so we have a great job and it's almost impossible, but it's not. Now in Acts chapter 2 verse 41, we know how that 3,000 then were added. Then Acts chapter 2 verse 47, the verse that we've quoted a number of times lately, Acts 2 47, praising God, having favor with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Now here is the key to evangelism. The Lord adds those who are to be saved. We have been deceived, I believe, to believe that we can save souls.

And if people aren't getting saved and this church is not full, it's because you're not doing your job. But you and I cannot save a single soul. We cannot add people to the church.

Yeah, we can have the greatest church growth program, and there are many excellent programs out there, and we can fill this church. But it's not real growth. It's not the real thing.

And you've heard me say before, I'm not interested in the numbers. I'm not interested in filling these pews with people who are not born again. Because the passage that we read in the Corinthian says that we need to take heed how we build.

One builds with wood, hay and stubble, and another builds with gold, silver and precious stones. And with wood, hay and stubble, you can build big and quick. But if you're going to build with gold and silver and precious stones, it's going to be small.

But the one will stand the test, and the other will not. The one will stand the test of time, the other will not. The one will stand the test of the judgment of Jesus on the day of judgment, and the other will not.

And so I'm determined to build with gold, silver and precious stones, with the real stuff. I'm not interested in fake Christians and fake Christianity. I'm not interested in filling pews with people who are just here for the wrong reasons.

Because we promise T-bone steaks or whatever. It has to be a work of God. It's not something we can manufacture.

And so the passage, let's go to that passage, 1 Corinthians chapter 3. We'll come back to Acts. 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Verse 5. Who then is Paul? Who is Apollos? But ministers, remember that word servants, through whom you believed as the Lord gave to each one. Who's Paul? Just a servant.

Through whom you believed, he happened to be the instrument, the vessel, the channel. But remember, he says, as the Lord gave to each one. So it's the Lord who gives.

Then he says, I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Now, folk, I'm not saying that we have to sit back and do nothing. Some of us plant, others water, and others reap.

But at the end of the day, there is one very important component. And that is the increase. You can put the seed in the ground, you can put water on it.

But unless something makes that seed germinate and sprout forth and grow, you're never going to have a harvest. You can plant millions of seeds. You can water it with billions of gallons of water.

But unless there's life in that seed, nothing is going to happen. And it is only God who can make it happen. And we forget this and we say, well, just go through this little program, just ask these questions, do this, do this.

Then people will say, yeah, I'll pray the sinner's prayer. But it's God who has to make it happen. God has to perform the miracle of changing that life.

Jesus says to Nicodemus, you have to be born again. But Nicodemus couldn't make himself born again. But that's what people do today.

Churches are filled with people who cause themselves to be born again. They joined the church, they got religion, stuck a fish on the back of their car. But there's no reality.

We need the reality. We need the real. Now, while we acknowledge then it is God who gives the increase.

What I need to do then, and what we need to do as a church, is we need to discover under what conditions will God give the increase? Under what conditions will God allow the seed to grow? Under what conditions will God add to the church daily those who are being saved? Because clearly it's Him who adds. Now, be careful. I'm not saying that we have to just sit here and then God's going to somehow, people are just going to come streaming through the doors.

He's going to use us. In the book of Acts, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. But our preaching is in vain unless we're going to the right people with the right message at the right time.

And it's only God who can send us to the right people at the right time with the right message. People who are ready for the message. Maybe someone else has planted that seed years ago.

Maybe other people have watered it over the years. And maybe we get the privilege of being able to reap the harvest at that time, the harvest of that soul. And we put another one up on our board and we say, ah, you know, another one.

But in fact, I was only the one who did the reaping. Others did all the other work in preparation for it. So under what conditions then will God give us souls? Under what condition will God add souls to the church? I believe under the conditions that we've begun to speak about this evening.

That we are a one accord. That we are obedient to His word. And that we are trustworthy.

You remember the good Samaritan found this man next to the road and he took him to an innkeeper. And he said to the innkeeper, and there's a sense in which there is a picture of the church. And he brings the man to the church.

And he says to him, take care of him. Here is two pennies. And when I come again, if I owe you anything, I'll repay you.

Do you think he would have just dropped that man off at any old inn? Or do you think that he would have found out which innkeeper can I trust? Which innkeeper is not going to take the two pennies and kick the man out on the street again? Which innkeeper is going to make sure that this man is cared for until he's

strong enough? And trust me to repay him the difference when I come back whenever that's going to be. See, he had to find the right innkeeper. Well, I'm assuming that it doesn't say so in the story, but that would seem to be the way you do it.

But I don't believe that God will add souls to a church that he cannot trust to take care of those souls. And I believe that more than try, we can go down up and down the streets of Burbank and knock on every door and hand out millions of tracts and speak to thousands of people. And I believe it's going to be a waste of time.

But if we are a church that God feels he can trust, that God knows he can trust, because we are not in it for ourselves. We live the lives that he wants us to live. We're prepared to make the sacrifices that are necessary to care for those who come in that are broken and in need.

This morning, a man came into the service and they came to see me during the week also. He doesn't hide the fact he's an alcoholic. He was dry for two years.

He's fallen again. Can you understand the struggle of a man who's in the gutter, who's about to lose everything, who doesn't even have what it takes to call his sponsor and say, I'm drinking again? Do we have the patience to deal with people like that? Are we willing to make the sacrifices of our time and our comfort and whatever it is to deal with broken people? You see, the problem is that we want all the rich people. We want all the intelligent people.

We want all the nice people. We want all the influential people in the city. If you remember, those were the people who rejected the invitation to the wedding feast.

And Jesus says, go into the hedges and the byways and find the crippled and the broken and the poor and the sick. Because those who are healthy do not need a physician. But it's those who are sick who need a physician.

Jesus didn't come for the Pharisees and all their holiness and piety and righteousness and knowledge of the scriptures and religiosity. A couple of them were saved. Two, as far as we know, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, that was all.

But the rest of his disciples came from the common people, people that were despised, people that were really nothing as far as the world is concerned. And so I really believe, and I'm speaking from my heart, that when we are willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to spend nights in prayer with men like Brother Mike, who I trust we will see again, came this morning. Sit with him again and again as he tells you, I still didn't call this my sponsor.

I'm still drinking. Until somehow God does a miracle and changes his life. Acts chapter 5 verse 14.

Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. We like these verses. We all want to see people added.

But again, I want you to look at the context. Verse 12. And through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people.

And they were in one accord, with one accord, in Solomon's porch. And yet none of them dare join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And so again, these men are clearly filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, I just want to go, I know I'm jumping around. I just want to go back on the issue of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. How do we get the baptism of the Holy Spirit? That's a whole study, two studies, three studies on its own.

But Jesus said, if any man thirsts, let him come to me and let him drink. And from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. We need to spend time with Jesus.

Now, the whole tarrying thing I know has been pushed to other extremes. But folk, we spend two minutes a day in prayer. And we wonder why we're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

We can't even read a book of the Bible in a week or in a month. And we wonder why we're not filled with the Holy Spirit. So they were filled because there were signs and wonders among the people.

And we don't want to overemphasize the science, but they were all of with one accord in Solomon's porch. Again, you see again and again, this issue of they were with one accord. And then I want you to notice verse 13, yet none of the rest dare join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

In other words, these people lived lives that were so righteous that people said, we can't join those people. That's the degree to which these people's lives were different. This was not a seeker-friendly church where people just said, we feel at home here.

People did not feel at home in this church. People did not want to join that church. But the people respected them.

They said, yeah, we can't join those people. But yeah, they walk with God and believers were added to the Lord. But this is the reverse of what is being propagated today.

We have to make it easy for people to come into the church. We have to make the church friendly. We have to serve the T-bone steaks and whatever else you do, not preach a confronting message.

So people can just, no, these people lived a life that was of such a standard that people said, we can't join them, but they respected them. Now, folk, it is under those conditions that the Lord adds to the church. It's not when the world says, oh, that's a wonderful church.

They play such nice music and they get nice girls in church there and the T-bone steaks are not too bad and they have champagne every morning after breakfast. That's a cool church. They never called this a cool church.

This was a serious church, a church where people said, no, we can't join them, but we respect them. And folk, I would rather that we be respected in Burbank than we be thought to be a nice church. Because at the end of the day, it's not whether Burbank joins us, it's whether the Lord adds people to us.

And so let's go to chapter six, verse seven. And chapter six deals with the appointment of the seven, we call them deacons. And you'll see that there was disharmony.

The one accord was broken because there were complaints between the English and the Spanish and, sorry, the Hebrews and the Greeks. And so they fixed the problem by appointing these seven and verse six says that whom they set before the apostles and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. Then the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

So you can see that once they did the right thing, once they dealt with the issue, obviously that brought peace, restored the one accord. And when they did that, verse six, they prayed, laid hands on them, verse seven, and the word of God spread. Now, one of the reasons why the word of God spread was why? No, it wasn't the witnessing.

The witnessing is important. No, not the one accord. Remember, what was the issue? What did the apostles say? No, here, why do we need to appoint these men? Verse two, then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

Therefore, brethren, seek among whom we may appoint over this business. Verse four, we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. You see, they were getting bogged down in doing the stuff other than the ministry of the word.

And so when they appointed the seven, as a result, it says the word of God multiplied. So they would set free from dealing with the disputes and they were able to get on with preaching the word again. And so really, what does it say? It says, it's really saying some plant and others water.

And each one must do what God has called him to do. But when those who are preaching are feeding the widows, the word is not going to spread. And so each one needs to find his, his job.

He's calling his gift. And as each one fulfills his gift, he sets the next one free to fulfill his gift. And so the work can get on and move and move on.

Very, very important principle. The seven, the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. And a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Chapter nine. Now, I trust that you've seen in the examples that we brought from the book of Acts, that every time there was an increase, it was as a result of them doing things other than evangelism, doing the things that related to fixing what was wrong in the church or getting their relationship with God right, or being obedient to the scriptures, being filled with the spirit. And, and, and so the, the, the adding of the souls was just a natural consequence of doing the other things.

If you, if you want fruit off a tree, you can't go to the branch and do something on the, on the branch and somehow try and make fruit come out of the branch. If you want a tree to bear fruit, what you have to do is you have to work at the roots. You have to make sure that it is fertilized and that it has water, and that it has the stuff in the roots so that the tree can make the fruit.

Now we try and do it the other way around. We try and make the fruit. We try and get the souls when in fact there are four more fundamental issues we have to deal with.

And when we deal with those things, the fruit happen automatically. The fruit just come. Now, chapter six, sorry, chapter nine, verse 31.

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. Again, look at the connection.

The churches had peace. Just another way of saying they were a one accord. They were edified, built up, encouraged.

They were walking in the fear of the Lord. What does that mean? Being obedient. Really? That's, that's really what it is.

When I fear God, when I respect Him, I obey Him. Same issue. Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

What is that telling me? They didn't get their joy and their kicks in the world. They got their comfort from the Holy Spirit and they were multiplied. Again, the conditions were correct and the fruit came.

You see, a farmer, when he wants to have a crop, and I'm sure Jenny knows all about agriculture now that she's been up that side. But if a farmer wants a crop, he can, all the farmer can do is create the right conditions. He's got to make sure the soil is the right texture, that there's the right stuff in the soil, that there's no weeds, that there's enough water, that there's enough light, and that he's obviously, that he's put the seed in.

But the rest of it is going to be a natural result of that. But if he doesn't create the right environment, if he doesn't provide the water, or if the soil is wrong, or if there's not enough nutrients, or one of those things is missing, he's going to get no crop. In fact, at the end of the day, 1 Corinthians chapter 3 says that we are, you are God's field.

We are His husbandmen. It's the same picture. Growth will come when the conditions are right.

Now, let me close by saying it doesn't mean that we don't have to witness. What is the, what is the need for witnessing? And I think I've run out of time on the tape, but how does a witness work? Do you go up to the court, to the judge and say, I saw what happened, I'll tell you what happened. No, in fact, what happens is the other way around.

The court calls you and says, come and testify to what you saw. Witness is always a response to an invitation to give testimony. Certainly that's the way it works as I understand it in any witness situation in a legal sense.

You can't go to the court and say, well, you know, let me tell you what I know. No, they will subpoena you. They will call you and say, tell us what you saw.

Be ready at every time to give a reason for the hope that is within you, an answer. And folk, when we live the kinds of lives that we ought to be living, people will ask us. This is not a quick fix.

This doesn't mean that you're going to sort out your life today and tomorrow somebody's going to come to you. People want to see consistency. People want to see evidence.

There's enough fly-by-nights and all sorts of, you know, things that don't really work, that make all sorts of promises. But if we live our lives consistently in a godly, righteous, upright way, the time will come when people will come and say, why? What have you got? Tell me about your hope. That's the time to witness.

That's the time when the seed is ready to germinate. But you just go and knock on somebody's door and say, you've got to be born again. And if you don't get saved, you're going to go to hell tomorrow.

Now, that may be true, but the seed is not ready. It's not the time. And so I believe that we have our first responsibilities to live the right lives.

Our second responsibility is to be ready to give an answer so that when someone comes and asks, I don't fumble the ball and say, well, you know, yeah, you know, I read this book and, you know, no, I have a hope. I have a reason. Jesus changed my life.

And I'm able to say it with confidence because the evidence is clear. And then finally, as we are faithful in Jerusalem, the call will go to Judea and Samaria and to the other most parts of the world. You see, if it doesn't work at home, it's not going to work anywhere else.

And if we cannot win those people that we know, in fact, this is just the reality, those people that we know on first name terms, our neighbors, our colleagues, our friends, if we can't win them for Christ, if our lives do not testify to such a degree that we have liberty to speak to them about Jesus, then do you think the Chinese are going to listen to us in China or anywhere else? But that's the problem. You see, we can't make it work at home, but we want to go and make it work somewhere else. And we wonder why the mission fields are all messed up with missionaries who couldn't live the life at home, but they want to go out in the mission field.

Now, God bless the missionaries and their sacrifices that they make. But if you're going to go into the mission field, it has to be because it worked at home in Jerusalem and then Judea and then Samaria, and then the outermost parts of the earth. And so folks, we have to get it right.

You have to get it right in your home, wherever you live. We have to get it right in this church. Now we praise God for opportunities to preach in West Africa and other parts of the world, but we have to get it right here.

This is our Jerusalem. Amen. Questions?

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