

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

"Our Calling"

Rev. Carl Haak

February 1, 2004; No. 3187

Dear radio friends,

Every member of the church has both the privilege and the calling to be a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to do this by the very example of our lives, first of all, or, what the Bible calls, our conversation. The word "conversation" in the Bible reflects the truth that our life *says* something. It says something about God.

We read in I Peter 2:12, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." The world beholds the life of those who testify and confess the gospel. Our life must be a clear and shining witness of that gospel.

Our witness is not only our lifestyle, but also our words. We are to speak and to leave behind us a witness, in our words, of the truth of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ. Every member of the church, both old and young, not just the minister and elders, but all the members are called of God to be personal witnesses of the truth of the gospel.

We read, for example, in Isaiah 43:12, "ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God." Again, in Acts 1:8 these words of the ascending Christ: "and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." It is, therefore, the privilege and the duty of every believer to be a witness of the gospel.

Both of the passages in Isaiah 43 and Acts 1 that I have just quoted to you bring out the honor and the grace of God in making us His witnesses — witnesses of the gospel of His Son. They also bring out the calling or duty that all of us have as members of the church. The Scriptures teach us that the church on earth has the duty and the privilege from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel. For this, Christ has given to the church the special office of the minister of the Word, or preacher and pastor, as we read in Ephesians 4:11 and 12, that He has given to the church pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints. Again, we read in I Corinthians 1:21 that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The idea there is not that the content of the preaching is foolishness. It is the truth of God. But many men

would say, “What a foolish way of spreading forth the truth of the gospel — through preaching!” Yet, we know from the Scriptures that God has called the church to preach the gospel. This is the chief and primary way whereby God builds up His church. So the apostle Paul continues in I Corinthians 9:17 to say that “a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me,” that is, God had appointed the means through which He will accomplish His saving purposes, and that means is the preaching of the gospel committed to the church.

But it is also true, and it is not in opposition to what I have just said, that Christ has also sent each member of the church to be a witness, a faithful witness, of the gospel, of all the things that we have seen and heard, as we read in Acts 4:20. As we have heard the living Word of God preached to us, so also that Word, living now in our heart, is to be our witness before the world.

Our witness, then, is broad and all embracing. We are to witness not to some but to all whom God places before us — rich and poor, neighbor and stranger, those who are not Christians and perhaps even those who are Christians but need still to be shown the more complete way of salvation.

Our witness must be faithful. It must be according to the truth of God’s Word. But we must also be faithful witnesses. We must use the opportunities that God has given to us, as members of His church, to witness of the gospel. For Christ has given to each member of the church also an office — the office of all believers (of prophet, priest, and king). And it is in this capacity of believers that we have the commission to witness. When Christ instructed the church to go and to make disciples of all nations, He gave that great commission to the entire church, so that every member must face this calling as a solemn duty before God. Pastors and missionaries must make disciples by preaching and by baptism. And members of the church are also involved in making disciples by their witnessing. This is a privilege and a calling that is held before us in the Scriptures.

Do you hold it before your eyes? Do you seek to be a faithful witness? Is this something that you grow in? Do you find a desire worked in you more and more that you be like the apostles, who in Acts 4:20 (when they were commanded that they may not speak in the name of Jesus) responded: “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”? As the hope of eternal life is within each child of God, so also that hope more and more must shine out of us in this world of darkness.

To be a faithful witness of the gospel, then, is an important aspect of our Christian calling and life. We certainly have many things to do from our Lord. We must grow in grace personally. We must work diligently in our occupations. We must raise our family and bring up our children in the fear of the Lord. We must seek the things of the church and of Jesus Christ. And we are to be witnesses — not in addition to all of those things that I mentioned — but our lives must be lived in such a way that they are constantly giving a testimony before the world, before our children, before the church, of the Lord who has loved and saved us. And we must use the opportunities that God gives to us to speak of Him who is our God and our Savior.

It is very crucial, as we consider our calling to be witnesses, that we do so under the authority of God's Word. For the subject of evangelism and witnessing can, perhaps, raise certain red flags due to false ideas and methods so abundant today concerning evangelism and witnessing. Much of witnessing and evangelism today, throughout the church world, is tied to the false doctrines of Arminianism, that is, of "freewillism," the false and unbiblical idea that it is the sinner who makes his decision for Christ and that Christ cannot save a sinner without the sinner first exercising his free will. There are also unbiblical methods employed today in what is being called the "user-friendly" church. And there is the idea that the church must conform itself to the world in order to attract the world into the church, thereby ignoring the majesty and glory of God and the reverence which is His due. There are emotion-based decisions. There is witnessing which proceeds from the idea that people must be pressed for a decision, that each Christian then becomes something like a salesman, to see if he can make a sale for Jesus Christ.

There is abundant error. But error must not make us shy away from that which is right. Error must not rob us of the truth. We must not react to error by beginning to look at our personal call to witness with suspicion. Biblical principles must be brought to bear on our hearts. And out of those principles must come a heartfelt, warm, and faithful witness of the truth of our God.

Each one of us is called to be a witness. "Ye," said Isaiah in chapter 43, "are my witnesses." And, again, our Lord and Savior said in Acts 1:8, "And ye shall be witnesses unto me."

The word "witness" in the Scripture has a legal connotation. A witness is one who, first of all, has seen something and knows something. Secondly, a witness is one who has been called upon to testify of what he has seen and known.

The word is familiar to us in the court of law. The defense or prosecution will bring forth witnesses, that is, people who have firsthand knowledge, who have seen or heard. Now, placed upon the stand, they are given the legal obligation, the responsibility to speak and to say what they have seen. Failure to do so is punishable by the law.

So also are we witnesses of Christ. That implies, first of all, that you and I, as Christians, as members of the church, have been given to see and know the things of the Spirit of God, the things of Christ. I Corinthians 2:12 makes this plain. "Now we," we read, "have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." A faithful witness of Jesus Christ is therefore one, and can only be one, who has received the grace of God unto salvation. That comes out very powerfully in the passage in Isaiah 43. In the opening verses of that beautiful chapter, God speaks of His eternal, His sovereign, His powerful love toward the elect. He says to them, "Since thou wast precious in my sight,... I have loved thee." And the passage goes on to speak of the fact that God, irresistibly, calls these unto Himself and gathers them from the east and the west and says to the earth, Give up and bring My saints, My precious ones to Me. Then God says in verse 10, By grace, you are the ones whom I have chosen. And I have chosen you that ye might know and believe Me, and understand that I am God. Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I am the LORD and beside Me there is no savior. And because of all these, ye are My witnesses, that I am God.

God is speaking here of the most basic, the most majestic, the most awesome of all truths. He is the *living* God. He is our God. And we know that because He has revealed Himself to us out of His love and grace. Now, because you have been given to know the truth that God is God, you are My witnesses, saith the Lord. You see, it is not something that, perhaps, you might or might not want to do. It is a calling. You are the witnesses of God.

But more. A witness is not only one who has been made a witness by grace, but also one who has been empowered to speak by Christ. That is very comforting. Let us understand that. That is also brought out in Acts 1:8 where Jesus is speaking as the ascended Lord and the One who promises to His disciples the Holy Spirit. Previously, throughout His ministry as well, the Lord had spoken of the fact that His disciples would be placed before the unbelieving world to leave a testimony for His sake. He said to them that at that time He would give to them a mouth and wisdom that all of their adversaries would not be able to gainsay or resist.

Then, at the ascension, He says, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria." The teaching of the Scriptures here is simply this: Christ has promised to give to each believer the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us, that is, gives to us understanding of the Holy Scriptures and convicts us of those Holy Scriptures, and therefore qualifies us to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church does not refer to some unique blessing for a special few of the church in some baptism of the Holy Spirit so that now members of the church can speak in tongues. That is not the truth. But the truth is, the coming of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ granted to the heart of each and every believer to convict him of the truth, to give him to believe the truth of the Holy Bible, to give him to know the Lord Jesus and His sovereign and eternal love, and then to empower him to speak of that love of Jesus Christ.

The idea of the Holy Spirit today is that His blessings are something that you conjure up by some kind of emotional swaying together in a circle and then you get some type of special illumination of the Spirit. No, that is not the biblical teaching. The biblical teaching is that the gift of the Holy Spirit comes upon the heart of the believer by grace and illumines, makes known, the Scriptures to his heart so that now he is empowered to be a witness of God. God has given to us to know the things of His kingdom. He has convicted us of those things through the Holy Scriptures. He has given us to know that He is God, that Christ is His eternal Son now in the flesh, and that He is the only truth and salvation. We have received, then, the anointing of the Holy Spirit so that each believer is a prophet in Jesus Christ. Thus, we have a spiritual duty, a calling, which God works in our hearts: we are to speak of the things that we have seen and heard.

Christ is the true and faithful witness of God. Christ is the prophet sent of God to declare the truth of God. But we share, as members of the church, as true Christians, in the anointing of Jesus Christ. And we are made prophets so that we may witness and speak of Him. That is our calling.

God, by His grace, has made each believer to be a witness both in his conduct (the way he lives) and in his words, to his neighbors and to his associates, of the truth of God and of His Son Jesus Christ.

Ye are My witnesses. Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.

The question is not, then, am I a witness, should I witness of my faith? That is not the question. You *are* a witness. And, by God's grace, you are saved in order that you *might be* a witness. The question is this: Am I a *faithful* witness, not only faithful in the content of my witness, but faithful also in the use of the opportunities given to me to witness? Am I faithful to my calling?

God has given to His church the call to preach the Word, through the preaching of the gospel by one who is sent by the church, a pastor. That is primary in God's saving purposes. And all of our witnessing, as we are going to see in future messages, must also direct those to whom we witness to the church. For the preaching of the gospel is the primary means of God in the sanctifying of God's people.

But God has also sent forth every believer and member of the church to be a witness, to speak of the truth of the gospel. Throughout all of our life, in our conduct and in our words, God has said, "This people have I formed for myself. They shall show forth my praise."

If you ask me, "Exactly, then, how do we perform this calling?" (in the coming weeks we are going to look at that more carefully), let me say at least a few things today.

There are three things that we should hold before us. First of all, there is the need that we have to reach out to our neighbors and associates. Now a careful distinction must always be held before us. The Bible makes very plain that we are not to have friendships with the world, which would deny our witness or corrupt our souls. That is, we must not join with an unbelieving neighbor *in* their activities. But our avoidance of such ungodly friendships must not take away from us our calling that, as we have opportunity, we are to witness to them. And any effective witness to our lost neighbor necessitates contact with him, which can be interpreted as genuine concern for his spiritual well-being and for him. It takes much effort to build bridges with such a neighbor and to bring the truth of God's Word to him.

Secondly, when such contact has now been established, we must know how to speak of the gospel and share our faith. That means that we must daily be studying the Scriptures ourselves and daily seeking to understand that glorious faith. Be involved in membership of the church. And not just any church, but in that biblical, Reformed church, that church that proclaims without shame the majesty and glory of God in all things.

Then, as we live in the Word and know the truth, we are to seek to explain that truth to the person with whom we have made contact. No one can take your place. That is your calling at that time. You may want, as you continue to witness and speak to them of the truth, to invite them to the church. You should begin, perhaps, by inviting them to a Bible-study in the church or, perhaps, to offer to study the Bible with them personally. Bring them to a Bible-study of the church, if they are willing to come, for sometimes, for one who has never been to church at all, to come to church is the most daunting thing.

Then, as you seek more and more to establish that tie and to speak to your neighbor of the truth of the gospel, you invite them to come with you to the church. That is our goal — to get that person interested in coming to the church to hear the preaching of the gospel and to worship the living God.

Then, as that person comes with you, you must show genuine interest in him. Sit next to him. Help him find the Bible text (he might not know the books of the Bible). Sit next to him and help him. Find the songs in the Psalter for him. And, afterwards, after the sermon, be willing to sit down with him to discuss with him what he has heard and explain it to him. And, under the blessing of God, as this person becomes interested in the truth, then you want to take him with you, perhaps, to a membership class in the church for formal training in the Word.

Ye are My witnesses, saith God. Ye shall be witnesses of Me, says the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God give us enthusiasm and may God give us a heart to be faithful to this calling.

Father in heaven, we do thank Thee today for Thy Word. And we ask for its blessing upon our hearts. Thou hast opened the truth of the Scriptures by grace to us. Thou hast revealed to us the things of the Spirit of Christ. We pray now that as those things are known to us personally, we might respond with the apostles, "We cannot but speak of the things that we have seen and heard." Bless, then, each one of us in our calling as members of the church to be witnesses of the truth. Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

"Our Motivation"

Rev. Carl Haak

February 8, 2004; No. 3188

Dear radio friends,

In our previous radio broadcast we began a series of messages on "The Faithful Witness," that is, on the truth that each child of God is called to be a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that every member of the church is called to be a witness, both in his life and in his words, of the truth of salvation. We saw at that time that the word "witness," as used in the Bible, carries a legal idea, that of an eye-witness, and, therefore, of a moral obligation before God to speak of the things that we have seen and heard, and that this calling then belongs to our very salvation. When the Holy Spirit has opened our hearts to the gospel of grace, He has done so not only for our own comfort and enjoyment, but He has done so in order that we might also testify to others of His grace to us. So the apostles could say, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Today, we want to look into the motivation for our witnessing. This is very important. If our witnessing is to be faithful before God, not only must its content be correct, but the motivation for doing it must be correct in our hearts. And, again, only God can give to us this motivation. He does so by showing to us the truth of His Word — what that motivation ought to be. Then, through that Word, He writes it upon our hearts.

From the Scriptures today, I hope to show you three things that motivate us to be faithful witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives and in our words. The motivation is not that we might be some type of super spiritual salesman. It is not that we are going to pride ourselves in what we have done. But the motivation is found in three things.

First. The glory of God. God is worthy to be known because of who He is. The question is: Do you know God? Have you seen His glory? Then you will desire to be witness of Him.

Second. Our motivation must be the love of the neighbor. With the love of God in our hearts we desire the neighbor's highest good. What is that highest good? That his sins be forgiven, and, if it be according to God's will, he may be brought to Christ.

Finally, the motivation arises out of the impulse of our own salvation. For the Lord said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34.

So, I speak to you today on the motivation that we are to have to be faithful witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That first motivation is a love of and a desire for the glory of God. There can be no other chief motive than that. In fact, that is the *sole* motive that must be behind every activity of a child of God. God is glorious. And the only good thing is to obey and trust and know Him and worship the living God. God is worthy to be known because of who He is. And it is right here that so often we must confess that our faith is shown to be weak and only a small beginning. We are not staggered as we ought to be by God. The reverence and the awe of God is conveyed to us throughout all of the Scriptures. I think especially of the prophecy of Isaiah. There God says in chapters 40-48, repeatedly, that "I am He — that there is no God before Me — yea, before the day was, I am He and there is none that can deliver out of My hand — I will work and who shall prevent it?" Read those chapters. I know of no other passage in the Scriptures that sets forth so beautifully the majesty, the immensity, the grandeur, the glory, the sovereignty, and the brilliance of the living God. Meditate upon those chapters often.

We are not staggered as we ought to be by God.

We must confess, in the light of those chapters, that our thoughts of God are far too puny and too human. That was God's complaint through Isaiah to His people Israel. "Ye thought that I was altogether as yourself." Oh, people of God, God is almighty. He is holy. There is no searching of His understanding. Bask in the light of the truth of God!

For your motivation to witness, do not take your soul to some self-help book or positive-thinking book in a Christian bookstore. But bow down with loving awe and reverence before the living God revealed to you in the Scriptures. The more we know of God and the more we walk with God, the more spontaneous, vibrant and faithful will be our witness. The more we understand in the depth of our hearts the chief end for which we have been saved, namely, to know God and glorify Him forever, the more we will be willing and able to speak a word of witness. Are you afraid to leave a witness of the living God? Are you too busy? Is your mind so much on other things that you simply do not say anything when an opportunity is before you? Are you, perhaps, as a young person, embarrassed of your Lord Jesus Christ and of your God?

What is the answer? Well, there can never be any change or improvement in us apart from this: Let us know our God! And let us, through grace, have zeal for His glory! I think of Daniel, as he stood before the king, in Daniel 5, when the king was offering to him all kinds of gifts if only Daniel would tell him if he was going to get out of the scrape that he was in, and of how faithful Daniel was as he stood before a powerful earthly king. He said to the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing...Thou...hast not humbled thine heart...but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven. And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Daniel was able to leave a faithful, pointed, humble witness before that king because Daniel knew the awesomeness of his God.

There is an example of this also in the book of Acts, chapter 17 at verses 16ff., when the apostle Paul was in the city of Athens on his second missionary journey and was alone. We read that Paul was waiting for his fellow workers to join him in Athens. But his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given over to idolatry. When Paul was in Athens he saw the people of that city in all of their intelligence and sophistication, for Athens was the center of Greek philosophy. Yet, they were worshiping that which is no god. Here were creatures, men who had been created to worship the true and the only God, yet, in their pride and rebellion, they were making to themselves gods and worshiping them: Zeus, Apollo, Hermes, Athena. And it stirred the apostle Paul (it provoked him). What did he do? Did he find a group in the church and commiserate with them and say, "The world is getting worse. It's a mess! Look at all of this sin. Why doesn't God just send them all to hell?" Did he go sit in his living room and bemoan and say, "Look at all the lawlessness, the pornography, the juvenile delinquency"? Is that what he did? No.

No, Paul went up to Mars Hill and he stood before the worldly-wise who, apart from grace, would laugh at him, and he declared the gospel. He said, "There is a God who made you, and you must stand before Him in the last day." Then Paul declared to them very plainly that there was but one way of salvation — through the blood of Jesus Christ. What motivated him to do that? It was the glory of God that motivated him! Paul saw men, in their rebellion, seeking to bring glory to themselves, making gods after their own imagination, living in all of their egotistical and proud immorality. Paul's concern terminated in God and in the glory that was due to God. That was his motivation.

That must be our chief motivation as well. The people who know their God, says the book of Daniel, shall do exploits. What was the motivation for Jesus Christ in speaking?

This was it: My Father is greater than all! It is love for the glory of God that must propel us in our witness.

Second, motivation must be love for the neighbor. We find this expressed in Romans 10:1, where we read, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Paul had expressed his concern for his kinsmen according to the flesh at the beginning of Romans 9. Then in chapters 9-11, the apostle showed the sovereign purpose of God, that in the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, the Gentiles might be grafted in. In chapter 9 of Romans, Paul traces the hardness of so many of the Jews to the gospel of Christ to the eternal predestination of God in election and reprobation. According to God’s eternal good pleasure, He foreordained who shall be vessels of mercy and who would be vessels of wrath. Out of one lump of clay, the mass of humanity, God had made vessels to glory and vessels fitted for destruction. Paul, then, in that section of the book of Romans is teaching that salvation is rooted in God’s eternal predestination. And that salvation goes forth according to God’s irresistible plan and purpose. Yet, Paul says, “My heart’s desire and my prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”

Now, is Paul’s desire contrary to God? No! Paul gloried in and preached the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. But that truth of God’s absolute sovereignty did not mean that Paul did not desire, according to God’s own will, that his relatives, Israel, should be saved. We do not know whom God has eternally predestined unto salvation. We know that He *has*. To God belongs the issues of life and death. But who those are, those secret things belong to God. We know that He has chosen and He has willed that they shall come to Him through His Word. So, Paul’s heartfelt desire was that Israel, as it stood in its hardness, in its rebellion, in its pride, might by the grace of God be humbled according to God’s own will and that they might be saved. **Predestination does not extinguish the flame of desire for the salvation of those who are in darkness.** It gives us peace. It gives us encouragement. We go forth with that Word knowing that God will bring out of darkness those whom He has chosen.

Paul saw his own loved ones, the ones that he grew up with, the ones who now hated him as an apostle and saw him as an enemy and called him a turncoat; yet Paul, in the love of God, desired, according to God’s will, that they might be saved. He prayed for those who despitefully used him and persecuted him.

What is the law of God? The law of God is: Love the Lord thy God and thy neighbor as thyself. These are the two great commandments.

We are to have the motivation of the love of God, the glory of God, and the love of the neighbor. And the love of the neighbor in the love of God is to convey the greatest good to the neighbor. What is the greatest good that we could convey to our neighbor? Shall we tell him, as he moves next door to us, of the best place to have his bank account? Should we tell her of the good places to eat in the community? Shall we, over the fence, merely talk to our neighbor about the baseball team and who is going to win it all? Shall we, perhaps, speak of untold earthly things and leave it at that? Is that the best we can do for the neighbor? No. We must speak to our neighbor of the bread of life, of the knowledge of sins forgiven, of the only way to the Father, of the Lord of life, of the risen and reigning Son of God, and of the fact that this Son of God is coming soon.

No, I'm not talking about the fact that we should, perhaps, make a sign of John 3:16 and put it on our back as we mow our lawn and let that be our witness to the neighbor. But this: we are concerned about our neighbor's soul, and that leads us to get to know the neighbor in order that we might have an opportunity to bring a witness and so that the neighbor has an opportunity to get to know you and ask you of the things that you believe and the things that you might tell him of the treasures of God placed in your heart. If we can see our neighbor day after day — he goes to work, we wave across the street at him — and feel no desire to explain to him the knowledge of Jesus Christ and feel no compassion for him because he does not know God, then how dwells the love of God in us?

No, we do not do that because we think we are going to earn their salvation or earn our salvation. But we do that because God is glorious and we are to love the neighbor for God's sake. We are to trust in the eternal purposes of God and we are to bring a word of witness.

The final motivation will be that we will do this out of the impulse of our own salvation. The apostles said, "We cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard." For Peter and the other apostles to be silent and not to preach of Jesus Christ would have been for them to deny what and who they were. A man speaks out of the treasures of his heart. He cannot help that. You are going to speak about the things that you love. That is why parents spend time visiting (young parents especially) and the conversation always turns to their kids. We smile about that and maybe, when we become older, we begin to resent that — they only talk about their kids, we say. But that is because parents carry their children on their heart. Likewise, when Peter was commanded that he not speak any more in the name of Jesus, he said to them: "You don't know what you are asking. Don't speak in His name? Hush up about Jesus? But

this is not something we learned in a book. This is not something that took place outside of us. We can't just turn this off! These are the things that He hath done for us." So, they said, "Come," Psalm 66:16, "come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." For us to be silent would be to deny what Jesus has done for us. That we cannot do! We, says the apostle Peter, "will obey you in every ordinance of the government. We will pay our taxes. We will endure every hardship. We will fight in your armies if drafted. We will be silent when we are slandered. But we cannot deny the name of Him who confessed our name upon the cross. We must speak." Acts 4.

So it is out of the experience of salvation that comes the impulse to have our light shine that others may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. We must pray to God to produce this in us more and more. We must not have the attitude, "Well, I'm saved by grace. I've got mine salvation. Who cares about somebody else?" That is not right! That is not Reformed or biblical! No, those who have been saved by the grace of God now no longer have that consuming interest in themselves, their name, their honor. But they are filled with the zeal for the glory of God, the love of the neighbor, and the truth of the salvation of their souls comes out in their words: "Ye are my witnesses."

When you stand before the world of men, then, as that gospel is in your heart, you will speak. Perhaps it is at the business lunch and someone says to you, "You know, I have been watching you in the office. What is there about you that is different? You don't swear, you're here on time, and you go home at night. Why do you do that?" Right then is the call to witness of Him who hath loved you and for whose sake you do those things.

When your teenage friends or college friends ask you, "Why won't you go with us to this party? Why can't you drink? Why can't you lighten up a little bit?" Right at that moment, out of the abundance of your heart, your mouth will speak. It implies that your life has been speaking before your mouth.

Our life must speak or we had better keep our mouths shut.

But when we walk faithfully with God, and others then begin to ask, speak of Him. How abundant is your heart? Is your heart filled with the glory of God, and the love of the neighbor for God's sake? Do you experience the wonder of that grace of God? Ye are my witnesses, says the Lord. No, you do not need to become a street preacher. You do not need in the holiday season to go out in front of the mall and get a megaphone.

That is not what we are talking about. You do not need to become a super salesman and try to get decisions out of people and how many people you can rack up for Christ. No. But the Lord says that if you peel away the layers of the heart, you will find there in the child of God a desire that God's glory be known — a desire according to God's will that men be taken out of darkness, and a desire to speak of what God has done for our souls.

You are my witnesses! What a privilege. What a sobering word. Let this be our motivation. Let us, out of the great treasure God has placed in our heart, speak of Him whom our soul loves.

Father in heaven, bless Thy Word. Bless it to our hearts. We pray that out of the motivation for Thy glory, the love of the neighbor, and the experience of our own salvation we may witness of Thy great goodness to us. Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

"Our Limitations"

Rev. Carl Haak

February 15, 2004; No. 3189

Dear Radio Friends,

In our last two programs we have looked into the Scriptures concerning the calling of every member of the church and of every believer to be a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This witness includes our lifestyle, or what the Bible calls our conversation before the world — our life as it is to give a testimony that we belong to the faithful Savior Jesus Christ. This witness involves our actual words and leaving a witness and testimony of the gospel of Christ to others.

Last week, you will recall, we looked into the motivation that must be behind this witness. That motivation, we saw from the Scriptures, is first of all the glory of God. For God is worthy to be known because of who He is. Secondly, we saw that we are to be motivated by the love of the neighbor. With the love of God in our hearts, we must desire the neighbor's highest good. The highest good is the knowledge of the gospel, if it be that God would so work it in their hearts. Finally, we saw that the motivation would arise out of the experience of our own salvation. For it is out of the abundance of the heart, said Jesus, that our mouth will speak.

Continuing our series today on The Faithful Witness, I would like to consider with you our limitations, that is, those things that we cannot do. It is very important for us to know what we cannot do — not to discourage us, not to give us an excuse for not witnessing — but rather that we might go about our witness faithfully. Knowing the things that we cannot do, we will more faithfully and earnestly attend to the means that God has given in our witness. And more, knowing our limitations will bring us more earnestly to the throne of God in prayer, asking that He will, by His power, do what we cannot.

If we are to understand our limitations in the whole area of our Christian witness, we must come to grips with the understanding of man's true state apart from God's grace, as it is told us in the Bible. Fallen man, according to the Holy Scriptures, is spiritually blind to his or her own desperate condition before the holy God. When it comes to the true God, Christ, the Word of God, and those things which are to come, fallen man is blind. He cannot see. He is blind to the things of God, blind to his own spiritual corruption, blind to the beauties that are in Jesus Christ, hopelessly blinded by sin.

Fallen man views the gospel of Jesus Christ as an intrusion, as an irritant, as something that would upset his plans and disturb his sleep.

So, when we go forth with the witness of the gospel, we must expect to meet with two formidable enemies: willful ignorance and love of darkness.

The apostle Paul writes to us in Ephesians 4:17, 18, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." In describing man's unregenerate state, that is, man's state without being born again by the grace of God from on high, Paul underscores two things: man has a darkened understanding, and he loves darkness. When the gospel comes, it addresses things so foreign to men's thinking, that it just does not make sense to them.

The conscience of every son and daughter of Adam is active. We read in Romans 2:14 and 15 that their conscience bears them witness, and their thoughts accusing or else excusing one another. But they (that is, man) refuse to reckon with their own desperate condition as fallen sinners before God. You may get a person to confess to the truth that he has not always been what he should be, hope to be, or desire to be. But to bring him to realize his desperate condition as a corrupt and fallen sinner before the one only God, this is something that is beyond our power to do. God must work this personal conviction by His Spirit.

Man cannot come to that understanding of himself, apart from the grace of God, because man is held in willful ignorance and love of darkness. He wants to be ignorant and he loves to be ignorant of the folly of his own sin before God.

We read in Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (*now note these words*), who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The idea is, who hold the truth *down* in unrighteousness. The apostle Peter writes in his second epistle, chapter 3:5, that man is willingly ignorant. Still more, we read in John 3:19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." This is the great folly of sin.

In the realm of things natural, men know and recognize their plight and welcome deliverance. In the realm of human life and in the realm of possessions men come to know their desperate state and cry for help. A drowning man in the midst of the water

cries for help. Why? Because he knows his natural condition and he knows he is about to die. He needs help. If a person is in an aircraft and the pilot comes on and says that the plane is damaged and landing is going to be very difficult and the plane is at great risk, everyone in the airplane knows what is at stake. And they long for a word of deliverance. They know the physical danger. If a plague walks through a city, a disease, people will go to clinics and to treatment centers and will receive the proper medicine, and the antidote. They will bring their children to be vaccinated. They will fall over each other and push each other out of the way to come for help.

But men are willfully ignorant of their own desperate state of heart as sinners before the holy God, and the impending judgments of eternal hell. Willfully they are ignorant and they love the darkness. By nature we do not want to be told. There is only one who can drag such a sinner against his will to the light. That One is not you or me. Yes, we are to testify and to speak of the whole truth of Jesus Christ. But we cannot change the will of the dead sinner. There is One who can. It is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read in John 16:8, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” It is the Spirit of Jesus Christ that convicts personally of sin. We bring the Word, we witness. But it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit alone to bring men and women beyond anything natural in their ability — to bring them to the pricking of their heart and conscience.

The natural conscience, perhaps, you can prick. You could explain to a man that he must make restitution of stolen property. You could, perhaps, prick a conscience concerning the great wrongs that one has done to another person. But whether or not a person is going to believe in Jesus and to know his sins as before the holy God and to know the wonder of forgiveness and righteousness in Christ, that is something that our ability, our power, cannot produce. The Holy Spirit must speak that to a man in his heart.

The human conscience may be brought down to guilt by my words. And, perhaps, a person can say, “Well, in the light of what you say, I’m obviously not what I should be.” But it is the Holy Spirit alone who convicts of sin and implants faith.

That is the problem. The problem is that we have broken God’s law, not society’s law. And it is only the Holy Spirit who can give a heart to bleed in sorrow before God.

When we understand the desperate state of man and his willful ignorance and love of darkness, then we will acknowledge our inabilities as we go about our task of witnessing. That means that, by our power, we cannot save by what we reveal of Christ and the gospel. I am not saying that our words of witness are useless. They are used by the Holy Spirit. I *am* saying that we must know our inability. It will not be by our power or our persuasiveness. It must be by the internal work of the Holy Spirit as we bring faithfully, compassionately, wisely and persistently, the Word of God.

The heart of the whole gospel that we witness is this: the salvation that is in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16 — “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation”). But for the heart to grasp that gospel, one must be brought to know his need, which Christ alone as Savior can satisfy. It is impossible for us to cause men and women to do so. They must be changed by the hand of God. We read in Isaiah 53:2, “and when we shall see him (that is, Christ crucified), there is no beauty that we should desire him.” Man does not and will not receive the gospel because he does not and will not perceive his own need as a desperate sinner or the beauty that is to be found in Jesus Christ. Read I Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” You see, it must be by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must bring a faithful word, but we are dependent entirely upon the power of the good Holy Spirit.

The man to whom you witness may have an IQ of 85 or 145; he may be uneducated or educated. But unless the Spirit of God works powerfully within his heart, he cannot receive the truth and he cannot grasp it as precious. It will be foolishness to him.

There must, then, be the change that God works. There must be the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. Yes, we bring the truth. We want to make that truth as plain and applicable as we can. We aim our words at their understanding. We aim our words even to their heart. We bring before them the truth of the Word of God using the wisdom that God gives. But it is the Holy Spirit who must open the heart and pour the gospel into that heart.

We cannot, then, induce men to faith and repentance by our persuasion. But that does not leave us hopeless. The Holy Spirit will do it, and He will do it through the Word. And, more specifically, the Holy Spirit says that He will do this through the preaching of the Word. That is why, as we said a couple of weeks ago, our witnessing is always geared to and comes out of the church. We live in the church, we hear that Word ourselves. And our witnessing is always that others might come to the church to hear

the preaching of the Word. And we preach. Why do we preach in the church? Because the preaching is the operation of One greater than all. God causes the light to shine out of the darkness. As in the creation, He causes that light of the grace of God to shine out of the preaching of the gospel.

But we cannot, of ourselves, induce men to faith and repentance. There is the current, widely accepted, false teaching in Christianity and in many churches that the human will has that ability, and therefore it depends upon our persuasiveness and ability to sell the gospel correctly to people. Yes, as I said before, we *must* bring our witness with some thought, understanding and compassion to the person to whom we witness. But man's will is not free. Man's will is bound in sin. And if God is going to bring one to repent and to believe, He must do so by His own mighty power.

But, praise be to God, He does. And He uses the Word to work that in them.

Now, does all of this discourage you? We have acknowledged our limitations, that the power of the witness is not ours, that we are but the vehicle, that we are but the instrument, and that the power can only be of God. Does that discourage you? Do you conclude, now, "Well, then what's the use?" If you do conclude that, then I have to tell you that you are cutting up the Word of God. We must know our limitations in order that we might be faithful witnesses of God. **For the truth of our inability makes us sensible of our absolute dependence upon God!** And that is the way we have to go forward in our witness.

It does not *prevent* our witness. But it causes us to go forward in the right state in our witness — a state of absolute dependence upon God. It is God's work to awaken men. He must work in the areas of the heart where only He can. The most wonderful place in all the world for a child of God ever to be, who feels his calling to witness of the gospel, is the place of absolute dependence upon God to bless the labor of his hands. We are dependent upon God! Let us acknowledge this.

Then, after we bring the Word of God, and as we speak of the Word of God to the work associate, to the neighbor, and we come back home, we do not simply say, "Oh, if only I had ... if only I..." No, we are absolutely dependent upon God to bless the work and to use our witness as it pleases Him.

Reflecting upon how we have witnessed, perhaps, to the associate, or to our neighbor — yes, we do want to learn. We do learn from that witness that there are many areas

of the truth that we need to know more about. And we need to be skilled and trained through experience in the way of witness. That, for sure. But, nevertheless, be it with all of our weakness, if a word of faithful testimony were left of Jesus Christ and His cross to the neighbor, to the unbeliever whom God has placed before us, then we may leave that to God and God will use our words even as it pleases Him.

That means that the knowledge of our inability as we hold that steadfastly before our eyes will hedge us up so that we do not use methods or schemes except those that are appointed by God for this task. It is God's work. Then I will use God's means. If I think it is *my* work, then I will go out and choose *my* tools. But if I believe it is God's work, then I will ask God, "What tools am I to use?" We read in I Corinthians 3:10, "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Since God's temple is built by His might, we must employ the tools and the means that God has chosen. That is why Paul says in I Corinthians 1:22, "The Jews require a sign." They want me to show them big signs in the heavens. And the Greeks, says Paul, "seek after wisdom." They want me to couch it in terms of human philosophy. But we preach Christ crucified, which is the power and the wisdom of God. We use the means that God has given to us, says the apostle. We preach because the power is of God. Paul says, "I don't come with dialog, I don't come simply trying to reach a consensus from our collective religious spirit; that we are trying to glean a few highlights from different religions and try to put it all together in the bigger context, the bigger picture. Oh, no!" says Paul. "We preach, we expound the Holy Scripture in all of its power and beauty." That is the tool the church employs in evangelism. And it is the Word of God that the individual believer also employs in his personal witnessing.

Paul goes on in I Corinthians 1 to point out that God's method in bringing the gospel, God's tools, are always calculated to humble man and to bring glory to God. God's method always humbles man and exalts God. God uses tools that promote His glory. Therefore, we will not use schemes or methods except those that are approved of God in His Word. Therefore, we will leave our witness prayerfully and humbly.

If we know our inability, we will plead with God to bless the means that He has chosen. We bring the Word as best we can. And we pray, "Lord, bless, Lord, use the Word even as it pleases Thee. I can do nothing. But, Lord, Thy Word is the power. Glorify Thy name."

And we do so humbly. Then as we witness to a person we are not consumed with a determination to win the argument. We know what we cannot do and so we will not

attempt to bring that witness out of pride or self-praise. But we will bring the mighty Word of God.

And, as God uses that Word, and, according to His will, as He blesses that Word, then where is the credit? The credit is all of God. As it is written, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:31.

We cannot bring men to faith and repentance. God must do that. But, you see, if God must do it, then it *will surely be done*.

May God make us faithful, dependent witnesses of Him.

Father in heaven, we thank Thee again for Thy Word and we pray that it may dwell in our hearts and guide our steps. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

"Our Tools"

Rev. Carl Haak

February 22, 2004; No. 3190

Dear radio friends,

One of the most wonderful words that a body of believers could ever hear from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ is recorded in Christ's words to the church at Pergamos in Revelation 2:13: "And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." You have been a faithful witness of Me. What a wonderful word from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ to be spoken to the church.

And it is this word that we desire to be spoken of us. "You have been faithful as My witnesses," saith the Lord.

In our brief series in these last weeks on personal witnessing we have seen that each believer in the church of Jesus Christ is called to be a witness in his life and in his words of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot but speak of the things that we have seen and heard. We have examined what motivation must be behind our activity of witnessing — the glory of God, the love of the neighbor, and the experience of the wonder of salvation in our own hearts. Last week we saw from the Scriptures what we cannot do. We cannot savingly reveal Christ, we cannot cause a person to know his own sinful ignorance and darkness, and we cannot induce conversion and repentance. We wanted to know that, in order that we might be shut up to the way of dependence upon God in our witnessing and dependence upon the means that God has given.

In our last message now today on personal witnessing, I would like to consider with you some of the tools that God has given to us that we are to employ in our witness. As we examine these different tools, we must be conscious of the tremendous diversity that there is among the people of God — a diversity consistent with the different gifts and talents, personalities and opportunities that are given to them. There are no two believers alike. Therefore, we must not absolutize at this point and say, "Well, this is how you do it and thus and thus." No, we must take these principles from the Word of God and prayerfully apply them to our own life and situation.

But what are some of those principles that must be before us as we go forth to be a faithful witness of our Lord?

The first is this: Prayer. We must pray that God will make His Word effective in the hearts of those to whom we give a witness. Prayer is not only necessary as preparation for our witness, but it is to be the attitude in our hearts as we give the witness of the truth.

We must pray that God will make His Word effective in the hearts of those to whom we give a witness.

We read in I Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” To sanctify means to make holy the Lord God in your heart. Have the Lord God upon your heart, before your eye. That is, live prayerfully as you go about your witness. Prayer is also to be made for those to whom you have testified of God’s Word, that God, according to His will, might make your witness effective and might give them an understanding.

We read in Romans 10:1, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and *prayer* to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” The word “prayer” there is “supplication.” It is not a general word for prayer, but it refers to a petition for the fulfillment of a certain definite need, which is keenly felt, a humble request made in the light of a situation where God alone can give the help that is needed. Paul speaks as a seasoned missionary. He knows his own heart and the heart of the Jews. He is not a romantic, he is not somebody who believes in some kind of positive influence to get people to change their thinking. No, he understood the opposition. He understood the hatred that the Jews possessed toward Jesus Christ. He had been the same himself. And out of a burden for his own kinsmen according to the flesh, he raised a supplication that God would furnish, according to His will, the help that was needed.

In our witness we must supplicate. **We must not simply go forth with a bubbly attitude and think that by our attractive words people will come running to the gospel.** We must understand that the truth of God is offensive to man. But in the face of indifference of friends, of classmates, of relatives, and facing the fact that men are adverse to the claims of God, that they are lovers of darkness, that they are willfully ignorant of the truth, we must bring our witness prayerfully: “Oh, Lord God, may it please Thee, according to Thy will, to break down stubborn impenitence and to use Thy Word. Use Thy Word, Lord, as it pleases Thee.”

We read in Ezekiel 36:37: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.”

There Ezekiel brings God's sovereignty and our prayers together. Repeatedly in that passage God says, "I'm going to do this. I'm going to sprinkle you. I'm going to renew the hearts of My children. Yet, I will be inquired of for this. I'm going to do it and I want you to pray for it."

The question then is, "Are we obedient children of God if we do not pray?" God says that you must pray. We are to desire Him, according to His will, to do even as He has promised. Therefore, we must pray.

But our prayer must be brought into the realm of the practical. We read in I Timothy 2:1 and 2, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority." Prayer must be made for all kinds of men. We are to pray that the roll of God's elect may be brought out of the earth and may be brought out of all kinds of men.

We must pray, then, not just in general. But we must pray specifically for those near to us, for those to whom we have an opportunity to witness that, if it be God's will, our word of witness may be used of God upon their hearts. Each one of us has his own particular circle. We believe in the sovereignty of God, that is, God orders our life and places us where we are. He places us in the precise family, the place at work, the home and the dwelling in the neighborhood. All of this is arranged by the sovereign and wise God. That is our stewardship. That is our area of responsibility. Prayer, then, is to begin in general: "Lord, gather Thy church. Preserve them. Send forth Thy Word." And then it is to go to the specific: "Lord, as I stand in this college classroom; as I work in the cubicle next to these other men; as my neighbors are on this street; Lord, may my life be an example to them, and may my words (when I am given an opportunity) be effective according to Thy will for their salvation and their understanding."

You say to me, "Well, what if they are not eternally chosen of God?" If you do not ask that question, it is because you do not take election seriously. So that is a good question. Everyone who believes the truth of the Bible concerning election will also ask, "How am I to pray for the unsaved in the light of the truth of God's eternal determination of who will be saved and who will be damned?"

The apostle Paul believed in eternal predestination. Romans 9 is the clearest passage in all of the Bible, of God's unrivaled and eternal sovereignty over the lump of human clay, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor even as it hath pleased Him, to make vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. Read the chapter yourself. We glory in it.

Why are we to pray? Because **our prayers are framed by the precept of God and not by His eternal decree**. We do not know who those elect are. God does. We therefore pray, "According to Thy will, Lord. Lord, let Thy will be done. If it be Thy will, Lord, may it be." Jesus declared in Matthew 11 that it has pleased the Father to hide those things that He spoke from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them to babes. "May Thy Word, then, Father," we pray, "always be revealed unto those babes. Gather the elect of God." For we know that that prayer shall surely be answered.

So we pray as God has commanded us to pray — dependent upon His almighty and eternal grace.

Prayer is not the only tool. Testimony is another. We must speak. Our testimony can be indirect, that is, our consistent, Christian lifestyle. This is what Peter is talking about in I Peter 3:15 when he says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." He anticipates that people are going to be asking us, "What makes you different?" We are then to live as the people of God in the midst of this world. And that is the whole Scripture.

The Christian walk must, therefore, be a walk that produces questions — questions to us of what makes us tick. Why do you do what you do? Every Sunday morning at 9:03 you put all those kids in the van and off you go to church. And then, in the evening, you do it again! Why do you do that? You see, when we live in fellowship with God, when we walk in the light of His Word, then there are going to be questions that are asked of us. And we must be ready to furnish an answer. Wherever we are — in the office, the classroom, shopping — we have to be ready.

This is a very powerful means. In fact, it is indispensable. For if our words of Christian testimony are not backed up by a consistent lifestyle, a lifestyle of repentance, confessing our sins before the world if we have offended them, then our words of witness are blasphemy. It would have been better for us to keep our mouth shut. No, our lifestyle must be there.

But then we must also be willing to speak of the gospel to others. We must be willing to speak to our acquaintances and to our neighbors of the gospel. That is our calling. We talk, we speak, we witness.

How are we to do that? We have differing gifts. There are some people of God who have a wonderful gift of engaging people in conversation. There are other people of God who have a more meager gift along those lines. Perhaps you sit on an airplane and you sit next to someone. There are certain people who can get a conversation going and leave a wonderful witness. They have those skills. There are others of us for whom that is not so easy. What is the answer? Are we all supposed to be something we are not? No. Let us be faithful with the gift that we have. He that is faithful in little, is faithful also in much. That does not mean that we cannot learn from each other and improve. But, let us be diligent to use the gift that we have. If we do not have that gift whereby we can engage people in conversation easily, there is also the printed page, the literature that we can leave with someone. There are also taped sermons that we can share and give to other people to listen to and say, "Listen to this. If you have questions about it, I can help you with them and explain some of the things that are said in this sermon." Perhaps you can give a person your card and say, "Here is my card. If you have a question, by all means ask me about it."

You see, when it comes to witnessing, we must be careful that we do not think that there is a pat way, one standard way, in which it is done. I say again, we can learn from each other. We are not all identical.

Do not be ashamed of Him. Do not be sinfully silent. Then we have to repent. But if you feel that you are inadequate, and you say, "Well, I can't do this," the Lord says, "Use the gifts that you have." Encourage each other in this calling of witnessing.

There are, of course, no two people that you are going to meet that are alike. Therefore, we must walk dependent upon the Holy Scriptures and dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not treat people alike. What I am referring to is this, then, that we must not simply have these pat phrases that we start repeating to people regardless of the situation or regardless of the person to whom we are talking, as if we really do not care about them at all. We have just got this little spiel that we are going to get off and when we are done, we have done our religious duty. That is not personal witnessing. We must walk dependent upon God, with His Word in our heart, trusting that He will give us something to say in that situation. It must not be artificial. We must bring the Word.

Finally, we must use the tool of public worship. We said this already when we began our message. We must bring men to the central means of salvation — the preaching of the Word of God in the gathered church. Preaching is central.

That is the teaching of the Word of God in Romans 10:13 and 14: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” We must not become victims of the extreme. Yes, we believe in the centrality of the gospel. But that does not mean that we say, “Well, the sign is out in front of the church. God had better just bring them in. We don’t have any obligation here.” No! It is our calling to be a witness. And our witness is always this: Come with me to God’s house to hear the Word preached, where we might have our souls fed to life eternal.

That is the book of Acts. You read that in this book repeatedly. Always the words of witnesses were geared in such a way that these people were brought under the preaching of the gospel — the power of salvation.

I am not going to take the time right now to explain that to you. But I will give you a few references. Think about Peter and Cornelius in Acts 11:13, 14, also as you read of that in Acts 10. We, then, do desire to bring people to the gathering of worship services under the preaching of the Word of God. That means that when we worship, we must be praying that that worship service may be blessed by God’s bringing others, the unlearned and the unbelieving, to worship with us and that, under the preaching of the Word, they might be convicted of and brought to faith and repentance.

To do so, we must be prepared in our own hearts to worship. The entire church is involved. There must be in our church services a reverent attitude. There must be the sense in the worship service that we believe God is in this place and that we have come with reverence to hear Him. That means that you do not slouch down in the pew. You do not show indifference. You do not let the Psalter hang down and mumble the words. You do not give the appearance that you are bored. You do not go to sleep. What kind of witness does that give to those who visit, of the God whom we worship? You see, the whole church is involved here. We worship the Lord purely because we believe that in such an atmosphere, those who would come to such a worship service, the Holy Spirit working in their hearts, might come to know and love the truth. So we sing from our hearts. We pray. We listen to the Word of God. We greet strangers and new people who come to the church. We show an interest in them. We talk to them. We show them kindness. All in the hope that God may take something of His truth and give them to know it and embrace it in their hearts.

Let us be faithful, then. Be faithful in our life. Be faithful in our words. Be faithful in our witness. Let us use the tools — prayer, testimony — and always with the goal of bringing others to church with us. And in this way, may God be glorified and the kingdom of His dear Son expanded until at last He returns on the clouds of heaven. Amen.