

THE POWER OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY – Fubara Ibama

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

Text: Acts 1:8 – “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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

In considering this passage of scripture, the first thing that is striking to me is the very name of the book of Acts. Why was it named the Acts of the Apostles, although it is evident that the Holy Spirit was the mastermind and executor of the Acts. It could have been rightly called the ‘Acts of the Holy Spirit’. But God chose to name it Acts of the Apostles, I believe, to challenge us, believers. Fellow human beings like us, with all their imperfections did this. It was said of them, “they turned the world upside down.” What have we done for the Kingdom? This is the high calling God is calling us to.

To begin with, I want to focus on two little words: ‘BE’ and ‘DO’. Acts 1:8 says, BE witnesses and NOT do witnessing. What is the difference? ‘BE’, means being who you are; whereas the latter, ‘DO’, suggests performance. The performance mode portrays a life of hypocrisy which is directly connected to a religious spirit. It is little wonder, therefore, why Jesus constantly rebuked the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees. Performance or putting up a show is unreal and flaky. Jesus wants us to get real. In Matthew 5:17, He says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” In other words, let what we speak agree with our actions. In order to do this, we must first have an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. How can we effectively tell people about someone we do not know very well. John, the beloved, says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)” (1John 1:1-2). Let us endeavor to have an intimate relationship with Jesus so we can produce good fruits.

I would like to use 3 Bible characters to highlight the power of personal testimony:

A. **The woman of Samaria** – (John 4:3-7, 28-30).

He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground

that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. ... The woman then left her water pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

Jesus deliberately routed His journey to pass through a city named Sychar. It is important to note that Jesus was used to crowds of all sizes. For example, the feeding of the 5,000 men with loaves and fish. By my estimation, the total number of people He fed would be between 25,000 – 30,000 people including women and children. You will agree with me that people were not into family planning in those days and in some cases a man may have multiple wives. One household could be as many as 10 or 15 people. Besides, in a typical church setting, women always outnumber the men, sometimes by a ratio of 3:1. It is comforting to know that, even though Jesus had ministered to such large crowds, He had time for one woman. Jesus sees you as an individual, He knows your need and will minister to you appropriately. This is a direct rebuke to some high profile ministers who would not accept an invitation to preach in a church that does not have a certain number of attendees. I wonder if such ministers see themselves bigger than the Lord.

Jesus invited Himself to have a special meeting with a troubled woman. I believe the woman chose that time of the day (12.00 noon) to fetch water because she was not expecting any one at the well at that time. People usually came to the well in the morning and evening not when the sun is at its peak. She has had a hard life and she did not want to encounter any embarrassment so she used time as a cover. But Jesus reached out to her in her hiding place. God sees us and He knows us. We cannot possibly hide from Him. He ministered to her at her level, beginning from the known to the unknown. By the time Jesus finished with her, she was so transformed that she left her water pot, ran into the city won her community to the Lord. Jesus changed both her life and her course. She became the first woman evangelist. This is how a personal testimony can have a positive impact on people's lives. This story is a replica of a Holy God and sinful humanity. ***"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*** (Romans 5:8) We never applied to God to bring salvation to us. We did not invite Him to help us out of our quagmire. Jesus took the initiative to seek and to save the perishing.

- B. The man that was born blind – (John 9:25; 10:19-21) *"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. ... There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them***

said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, these are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

No one can confuse you when you are talking about your experience. You are not repeating someone else's testimony. 'Once I was blind but now I see'. In John 10:19-21, this man's testimony has borne fruit.

C. **The Lame man at the Beautiful Gate** – (Acts 3:6-9; 4:4)

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

By this man's eloquent testimony, more 5,000 souls were added to the Lord!

On the day of Pentecost, all the one hundred and twenty people that were at the upper room were talking about the wonderful works of God. They were simply testifying. ***"And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:7-11).*** All Peter did was summarize what everyone else had been saying. The result was 3,000 souls being added to the church. In Acts 5:42, the Bible reveals the action of the disciples which bore fruit. ***"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."***

I had a wonderful experience in 1998. I left the church in the hands of one of the pastors that worked with me and travelled out of the country for 6 months. As soon as I turned my back, this young man left the church, took some members and started his church a few blocks away. This led to the depletion of the church and I met less than one-third of the membership when I got back. I was very heart-broken and as I sought the Lord, He gave me a strategy. I ordered some soul-winning materials from Evangelist Tommy Barnett, modified them to suit our local need and began a Soul Winning Club. 40 people registered and we started. We assembled at the church at 7:00 am on Saturdays, had breakfast together then I taught them on evangelism for 30 minutes after which I sent them out in twos to every home in the area. I instructed them not just to preach but to help the people with their domestic duties as much as possible and

invite them to church. At night, I met with my prayer team and prayed for the soul winning effort. This was how we watered the seed sown. We met at 10:00 pm and ended the prayer vigil at 4:00 am. Then we went home, got some rest and got to church at 8:00 am. It was very taxing but the result was worth the effort. We had an average of 35 new people in church every Sunday. In about three months we were able to fill up our sanctuary to overflowing. This is the power of personal testimony! This effort started a revival in church. Everyone got excited coming to church and got involved. At the same time, those in the soul winning program were being blessed in different ways. Some were promoted at their jobs, others received bonuses and pay raises, relationships were healed, etc. When we seek first God's Kingdom, He takes care of us.

Let us take seriously the command of Jesus in Mark 16:15-18 commonly referred to as the Great Commission. ***“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils;they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”*** We are called to “GO YE”. We need a special calling to ‘STAY YE’.

In conclusion, I would like us to look at the vital principles practiced by the early church that made them very effective and highly successful. The principles are that we:

- a) Have an effective prayer life. (Acts 1:14; 3:1)
- b) Are concentrated on the Word. (Acts 6:4,7)
- c) Have love and unity among ourselves (Acts 1:14; 2:44-46)
- d) Walk in holiness. (Acts 5:1-10)

If we would follow their foot steps, we would have the same result – a continual revival in the church with great signs and wonders.