

Titles of Christians (4)
Witnesses of Jesus Christ
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

In the past few weeks we have been studying several titles of Christians; today we are going to study another title:

^{NIV} **Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8 NIV)

These are the words of the Lord Jesus to his disciples after he had been resurrected from the dead. He commanded them to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and all the way to the ends of the earth.

Even though most people on earth today know the name Jesus Christ, they know very little about the Lord or know about him inaccurately. I was one of the Vietnamese refugees. My family in Vietnam followed Buddhism and Chinese traditional ancestor worship; my family and I used to say blasphemous words against Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus. Today when I look back at our words in those days, I feel pain! Why did we do such a horrible thing? One of the reasons is that we didn't know about Yahweh God and the Lord Jesus Christ, no one told us about them accurately. So we just followed what the other people were doing!

Christians have the responsibility to tell people about our Father Yahweh God and our Lord Jesus Christ; and we don't just preach the easy gospel of believing in Jesus to have eternal life.

Do you want to be a witness of Jesus Christ? If we want to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, what are we going to tell people?

1. We tell people about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus

First of all we have to witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, telling people that Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead.

^{NIV} **Acts 1:21 – 22** Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John's baptism to the time

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when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection. (Acts 1:21-22 NIV)

This statement was made by the apostle Peter. The book of Acts records what the disciples in the early days did to spread the Gospel. After the Lord Jesus had been taken up to heaven, the disciples met together regularly in Jerusalem. At one meeting, Peter stood up and said it was necessary to choose another person to replace Judas who used to be one of the twelve apostles, but he had betrayed the Lord Jesus and died after that. Peter said to choose someone who had been with them the whole time from John's baptism to the time the Lord Jesus was taken up to heaven, so that this person could be a witness of the Lord's resurrection.

^{NIV} **Acts 2:32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. (Acts 2:32 NIV)

This is another statement by Peter. He said that Yahweh God had raised up Jesus Christ, and that Peter himself and some other disciples were witnesses of it.

There are two other passages in the Bible saying that Christians have to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but we don't have time to look at them one by one. So I will just give you the Bible references here: Acts 3:15 and Acts 4:33; you can look them up if you are interested.

So we need to tell the world that Jesus Christ has been resurrected. Our Lord is alive, for we are following a resurrected Savior, not a dead person.

But how do we know that the resurrection is true? Only if we ourselves have died to sin and have been resurrected will we know that the resurrection is true. If our resurrection is real, then the Lord Jesus' resurrection is also real, and then we can go and witness to the world that our Lord has been resurrected. (Please refer to my other sermon "The Importance of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ".)

On the contrary, if we are still controlled by sin even though we don't want to commit sin but somehow we just keep on sinning, then we have not died to sin, and we have not been resurrected. In this case we cannot witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Even if you can talk eloquently, your word will have no power, and the world would not accept your witness.

This is the first point, that we tell people that the Lord Jesus is not dead; he has been resurrected and he is alive!

2. We tell people that the Lord Jesus Christ is leader and savior

^{RSV} **Acts 5:31 – 32** God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. (Acts 5:31-32 RSV)

Here the apostles said that Yahweh God had exalted the Lord Jesus to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel. So the second point is that we tell people that the Lord Jesus is Leader and Savior.

But what does it mean that the Lord would give repentance to Israel? We thought that repentance is from the sinners themselves, but how come the Lord Jesus would give repentance to them? It simply means that he would help people to repent of their sins. Repentance is not easy. Even if we want to repent, we might not have the strength to repent, and that's why the Lord Jesus has to come and help us. (Please refer to my sermon "Repent, The Kingdom of God Has Come Near" to understand the meaning of repentance). Even though the Lord Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of Yahweh God to be the Leader, he understands our weaknesses and is willing to come down to our level to help us to repent.

We need to emphasize that the Lord Jesus is both Leader and Savior in our lives. We should never omit the "Leader" part and mention only the "Savior" part. If the Lord Jesus is your Leader, you have to follow his leading, and then he will also be your Savior. But if you don't follow his leading, he is not your Leader; then he is not your Savior either.

When we sinners follow the leading of the Lord Jesus to repent of our sins, Yahweh God will give the Holy Spirit to dwell within us.

The second point is that we tell people that the Lord Jesus Christ is our leader and savior. It means if we follow him, we will be saved.

3. We tell people that the Lord Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead

^{RSV} **Acts 10:42** And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42 RSV)

The word "he" refers to the Lord Jesus, the one who commanded us to tell people that he is the judge of the living and the dead. That's his commandment.

^{RSV} **John 5:24 – 29** Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. ²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself, ²⁷ and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:24-29 RSV)

Here the Lord Jesus says that Yahweh God has given him the authority to execute judgment on mankind, because he is the Son of Man. He has never committed a sin, therefore he can judge all the people on earth. In the near future the Lord Jesus will return to earth and he will call to us; everyone has to respond, even the dead in the tombs will have to come out. All the people who have ever lived on earth will have to stand before the judgement seat of the Lord Jesus. Those who have listened to the Lord Jesus and believed in Yahweh God will have eternal life; those who have done evil will face judgment.

Please take notice that when it says, “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life,” it doesn’t simply mean doing a few good deeds according the standards of the world, but it means living a life obedient to the teaching of God. It is this kind of people who will be given eternal life.

If you have lived a life obedient to Yahweh God, you will be ready to stand before the Judgment seat of the Lord Jesus. Then you can go tell the world that the Lord Jesus will come back as a judge, who will judge both the living and the dead.

On the contrary if you don’t obey the teaching of Yahweh God, then you are not ready to stand before the judgement seat of the Lord Jesus when he comes back. In this case you cannot go out to witness to the world that the Lord Jesus is the judge!

So this third point is that we tell people that the Lord Jesus is the judge of the living and the dead.

4. We tell people about the suffering and the resurrection of Jesus Christ

^{NASB} **Luke 24:46 – 48** and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:46-48 NASB)

The word “He” in v.46 refers to the Lord Jesus himself. Here the Lord Jesus tells us that:

1. We should tell people about the Lord’s suffering and his resurrection on the third day;
2. We should tell people to repent, for when sinners repent of their sins, there will be forgiveness for them in the name of Jesus Christ.

In my earlier sermon “Repent, The Kingdom of God Has Come Near,” I explained about repentance in the Bible, and will not repeat it here. And in a previous point in today’s message, I talked about witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; but here we are only talking about telling people about the suffering of the Lord.

Please take notice that the Lord Jesus had suffered a lot in the hands of men. Since we are his disciples, we are also going to suffer in the hands of men.

^{RSV} **John 15:19 – 20** If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, “A servant is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. (John 15:19-20 RSV)

Here the Lord Jesus says we are not of the world because the Lord has chosen us out of the world, and the world hates us. If the world had persecuted the Lord, they will also persecute us; we have to prepare to suffer for the Lord.

^{NIV} **Philippians 1:29** For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him (Phi 1:29 NIV)

Here the apostle Paul says that when we believe in Christ, it is granted to us to suffer for him.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 5:8 – 9** Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Heb 5:8 ESV)

Here it says that the Lord Jesus Christ learned obedience through suffering; similarly when we suffer for Christ’s sake, we will also grow spiritually through suffering.

If you are willing to suffer for the sake of Christ, you can go witness for Christ. I have been attacked and insulted for speaking the truth, I did not fight back, but I did not retreat either. But if

you don't want to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ, then you just follow the way of the world, and the world will love you, but you can't witness for Christ.

Conclusion

Today we studied another title for Christians: "Witnesses of Jesus Christ"; we have to tell the world that:

- Jesus Christ has been resurrected, he is alive.
- Jesus Christ is leader and savior; if we follow him, we will be saved.
- Jesus Christ is the judge of the living and the dead.
- Jesus Christ has suffered for our salvation, so he is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

Acts 1:8 says we will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, and we will be witnesses of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria. In order to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, we don't need superior knowledge or eloquence in speech, but we need power from the Holy Spirit. Secondly, the most important quality of a witness of Jesus Christ is that he has seen Jesus Christ. The disciples of the Lord Jesus at that time had followed the Lord for a few years; they had seen the Lord performing miracles, they had listened to the teaching of the Lord, so they could witness to the Lord Jesus effectively. But today we do not see the Lord with our own eyes, we don't hear the teaching of the Lord coming from his own mouth, we don't see the Lord performing miracles, so how can we witness to the Lord? If we have experienced the leading of the Lord Jesus, then we can testify that he is real, that he is alive today. When we obey the teaching of the Lord, we can experience the power and the change in our hearts and our lives, then we know the Lord is true, the word of the Lord is true. Then we can go out and testify that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, that he is alive today, that he is the leader and savior of mankind.

Finally let's read a passage:

^{NASB} **Revelation 12:11** "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. (Rev 12:11 NASB)

The word "him" refers to Satan the devil, who deceives the whole world. The witnesses of Jesus Christ overcome Satan because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and they do not love their life even to death. They are willing to die for the Lord Jesus, that's why they can overcome Satan.