

Sermon Notes

Faithfulness, Fruitfulness and Facing Eternity - 2Peter (cont)





So powerful were the questions to me that I had to stop and pray that I personally and we as a church would not be guilty of being silent witnesses. That we would listen to the words of Peter in his first epistle... *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear... I Peter 3:15* Being set apart in our hearts toward God and ready to testify of the reason for our hope means to be prepared to introduce others to the Christ in whom our hope is founded and sustained. Jesus charged His disciples to go into the world and make disciples and since we are His disciples in this period of history we must receive the same charge as our purpose in serving Jesus with our lives.

I'm certain that none of those whose lives were so abruptly ended had any idea that it would occur that day. They were young, full of potential, and looking forward to a long and full life, and yet, through no fault of their own, that life was extinguished unexpectedly. If one contemplates how they would be impacted if someone they love, but had not shared Jesus with, were similarly taken, it leaves one with a challenge to be a faithful and vocal witnesses of Christ.

A self-evaluation of our efforts to evangelize those with whom we live, work or play may require that we face those things that inhibit our ability to testify of God's saving grace in Christ Jesus. What might those inhibitors be? Are we fearful of ridicule? Are we fearful that we don't know enough of the Word and may face unanswerable questions? Do we lack the necessary confidence in our own faith? Do we simply not have any meaningful contact with those who don't know Jesus?

When I stopped to examine my own failures in witnessing, I was reminded of the Scriptures that tell us of God's willingness to give us the needed wisdom, power, and even the words to speak if we will but ask Him. James 1:2-5, Matthew 13:9-11 and other scriptures tell us that we can have confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit to provide what we need to witness regardless of the type of circumstances in which we find ourselves. We are also given the assurance that God will never leave or forsake us. The times in which we live, are perilous times and we need to study God's Word, commit it to our hearts, share it with all those presented to us by the Lord and to be ready to speak. Let's not be a silent witness! **Pastor Doug**

Several weeks ago a horrific automobile crash took the lives of two women, two children and left another child, a young boy, in critical condition with an uncertain outcome for survival. I passed by the intersection where it had taken place a week after it had happened and viewed the makeshift memorial fashioned by friends and loved ones to remember those who had been lost. Two moms, their children and a guest riding along, innocently going about their daily business when a car speeding through a red light brought four lives to an end and seriously impacted another.

I was immediately reminded of James' admonition in the Bible. *...Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. James 4:13-14* It brought home to me the reality of just how tenuous life can be and how often we take our lives for granted and look forward to a life full of years and blessings without regard for how quickly it can end and we are ushered into eternity. I then faced a set of troubling questions. What if our church was the place last visited by someone whose life was then snuffed out unexpectedly? What if we had had an opportunity to share Christ with them but were silent instead? What if they went into eternity without Christ because of our silence?

A silent witness! How often do we find ourselves missing opportunities to share Christ with others by remaining silent? It may be that you or I were placed in their path because the Holy Spirit was working in their hearts and they were quietly seeking to find answers to their spiritual questions and we were chosen to provide those answers. What might have been the outcome if we had shared His plan of salvation with them? What might never happen spiritually in their lives because we were silent? Such were the questions that bombarded my heart and mind as I viewed briefly the memorial that reminded me of the horror that had occurred there.