



**“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day,” Luke 24:46.**

## **Participation**

**Lesson Aim:** to challenge the saved to become immediately active for the risen Lord

**L450. Date:** April 1976. **Text:** Luke 24:45-49; Matthew 4:18-25.

**Topic:** Church Covenant; Service; Witnessing.

**Covenant:** “. . . we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.”

**“I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me,”** Isaiah 6:8. That verse sets the spirit for today's study. The aim of the lesson is “to stress that the saved are immediately to become active for their risen Lord.”

Believers have been saved to serve. God wants no “secret service” believers. The Christian's most solemn challenge and highest opportunity is to show that Christ Jesus is alive and active in the world in each believer.

Jesus is alive! Of that there can be no reasonable denial. Jesus is in the world. He promised to live in personal contact with God's children. Jesus is active! By the Holy Spirit He is continuing the work which He began while upon the earth in His incarnate ministry. The living Jesus is in the world. He is active in you today!

The empty tomb proves that Jesus is alive. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit proves that He lives. The change in the disciples demonstrates the difference which the living Jesus makes. The presence of the Lord's churches in the world is living testimony that He is at work in the world. It is not Christians' place to worry over theory; it is theirs to live in the light of the living Christ whose they are and whom they serve. Jesus is

no longer in the tomb. He is in each person who trusts Him so that the life he lives is the life of Christ in him.

## **I. PARTICIPATE IN KNOWING GOD'S WORD**

**“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,” Luke 24:45.**

In the Christian camp there is a woeful ignorance of Holy Scripture. Many who have been believers for years have never read all the Bible. Multitudes have no systematic method of daily Bible study. Scores of others hardly read the Bible with any regularity at all. It is no wonder that God's people waste away in spiritual lethargy. There can be no spiritual vitality apart from the Word of God.

Have you said, “I cannot understand the Bible”? You can understand the Word of God because God is personally committed to teach it to you. Jesus ministered to the first Christian disciples by opening their minds that they might understand the Scriptures. He will do the same for you. The Holy Spirit who inspired the writers of Holy Scripture will illuminate the readers of Holy Scripture. You can understand the Bible because Jesus will enable you, and the Spirit will teach you.

Look at the Bible in the light of the risen Christ. Both the Old and New Testaments bear witness of Him. Consider it not as a mere book of theology or religious history. It is God's personal letter to you regarding Himself, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible will come to new life when you view it as God wrote it. Share in diligent Bible study. Enlist others to join you. Encourage Bible study in your church. Ask your pastor to preach on certain Bible passages or themes. Your congregation will likely become a “people of the Book,” if you will be a person of the Book!

## **II. PARTICIPATE IN SHARING GOD'S MESSAGE**

**“... Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations . . .” Luke 24:46, 47.** What is God's message? It is the report of what he has done in His incarnate Son. What did God do in Jesus? He suffered, died, and rose from the dead the third day. He underwent such an experience in order that remission of sins, upon repentance and faith, could be declared to lost men and women over all the world. God's message is that He loves and saves every sinner who comes to Him through Jesus, the Christ.

Each believer is privileged to share God's message of repentance and remission of sins. (1) He may share it by personal experience. Upon becoming a Christian believer, he turned from his sins to God and received forgiveness (remission) of sins. That started his Christian life. It was the beginning of a whole new area of living for him. (2) He may share it further by passing to others what God has done for him. He can direct others how to trust Jesus in order to receive remission of sins. The greatest experience a person can have upon earth is to be saved through repentance and faith. The second greatest is to lead another person to trust Jesus to receive salvation. It is each believer's privilege to be a part of God's redemptive work in the world.

The gospel has been perverted here and there. One adds works to grace and perverts it. Another leaves repentance and faith for an "easy believism." Wherever the gospel is declared in truth, however, it is still the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes (Romans 1:16).

### **III. PARTICIPATE IN BEING GOD'S WITNESS**

**"... Ye are witnesses of these things,"** Luke 24:48. The Lord was very emphatic. "Ye are witnesses," He declared. There is no way for a believer to get around that solemn commission.

What does it mean for one to be a witness? (1) It means for him to behold a certain thing so as to be able to give first-hand accounts of it. None today can be such a witness of the personal ministry of Jesus. (2) It means for him to be so acquainted with certain facts as to be able to recite them truthfully to those who listen. Each believer can be that kind of witness for Jesus. A witness is simply a person who tells others the truth about Jesus Christ and invites them to respond in faith to the facts.

Many Christians are fearful of becoming witnesses for Christ. The fear is groundless. Tell others of what the Lord Jesus has done for you and what He is ready to do for them. It is not necessary for you to feel an obligation to "get a decision." Present the facts earnestly; leave the results to God. He, not you, produces the harvest. Consider this definition: "A successful witness is to share the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leave the results to God." Be a witness. You can. Begin today!

Early Christians went forth with the Lord's commission ringing in their ears. You can do no better. Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses."

They replied, "We are His witnesses."

### **IV. PARTICIPATE IN EXPERIENCING GOD'S POWER**

**“... Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye . . . until ye be endued with power from on high,”** Luke 24:49. What is happening in your church that can be explained only by attributing it to the power of God? That question called me up with an unexpected start. What is God doing in the fellowship of the saints? How much of the church's “success” is attributed to principles of good salesmanship and how much is evidently the work of God apart from man's genius? Answer that question, and you will know whether or not you are experiencing God's power in your life and in your church.

**“You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . .”** Acts 1:8. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the secret of power. The Holy Spirit is personally present, indwelling each Christian. It is expected, very logically, that the power of God should rest upon each Christian. The tragic fact is, that is not the case. What is wrong? The Spirit must be quenched and grieved in some believers. God wants to empower believers. He will empower every clean vessel in His household. If they cleanse themselves of “all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1), they will know the power of the Spirit in their lives and upon their service. You may have to give up something in order to know the power of the Holy Spirit, but what you gain will be so much greater than what you lose, the exchange will be worth it all.

## **V. PARTICIPATE IN RESPONDING TO GOD’S CALL**

A popular religious song states, “It is no secret what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.” It is true! God does not play favorites. These are days of spiritual blessing as God gives His spirit to “sons and . . . daughters . . . old men . . . young men . . . servants and . . . handmaids,” Joel 2:28, 29. Expect God to do in your life what He has done and is doing in the lives of others.

**“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,”** Matthew 4:19. That call came to two sets of brothers: Simon and Andrew, James and John. Look at their response, **“They straightway left their nets, and followed him . . . they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him,”** Matthew 4:20, 22. That is the kind of response which should be given to the call of the Lord Jesus,

The same Jesus calls you. The same response should be yours. Why are some so slow in responding to the greatest opportunity ever given to men?

May God forgive! **“Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts . . .”** Hebrews 3:15.

What happens to the person who responds to God's call? Peter and Andrew, James and John became “pillars” in the kingdom of God as apostles of the Lamb. Their names shall be written upon the foundations of the heavenly city. They will sit upon thrones (with the other apostles), judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They are held in highest esteem by uncounted multitudes of Christians. Do you think they counted the call too demanding or the sacrifice too great? Give your best to God, and He will give His best to you, Heed His call to salvation and service,

A person tells on himself. He reveals what he is by what he does. Each Christian does the same. He may speak a lot about devotion, but his life will tell the truth.

How committed are you to service? As a member of the body of Christ, manifested in your church's fellowship and mutual ministry, you have a function to perform. A member of the spiritual body is expected to serve, just as a member of a physical body has a job to fill. A member who does not function is not only neglecting his ministry to the body, but he is also hindering the activity of the other members. For Jesus' sake, serve Him through your church.

The church is far from perfect. There may be flaws in your church which bother you a great deal, but for you to refuse to participate in her life and work will make you a blemish, too. Strengthen the witness for Christ in your community by active participation in God's work through your church.