

Many Have Witnessed His Presence

by
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Luke 4: 40-44

Each one of us will have a life experience in which we will encounter a person who will have a profound influence on our lives. In other words our lives will be forever changed by the presence of certain individuals. This person can be someone you believe in or they can be someone who says they believe in you. Lives have been changed by the positive influences of parents, teachers, pastors, and preachers. Lives have also been changed by the negative influences of boyfriends, girlfriends, best friends, and people who I like to call ... less friends. You know the ones who claim to have your best interest at heart but all the while they have their own hidden agenda. Well, glory to God Jesus' influence on the lives of Christians was never motivated by a hidden agenda. We know this because we have witnessed the testimony of a chorus of witnesses. Because you see, many have witnessed ... His presence.

And you know my brothers it's not really all that hard to see the presence of the Lord in someones life. In fact I can remember fondly, when I was a little boy, of seeing that heavenly presence in the sanctuary of Cedar Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Southwest Georgia. Yes, I can clearly remember the Sundays when my great uncle John, my grand mothers brother and a deacon of our church, would be moved by the Spirit to sing one of those old hymns. Yes, it's all coming back to me now. The memory of the small, white, wood framed church in the middle of an opening by the road and surrounded by tall Georgia Pines. Its windows open in the summer because we couldn't afford air conditioning back then. The ladies of the church were all decked out in their fancy church hats. And all you could here was the sound of the congregation's feet, rocking back and forth in unison, while great uncle John would sing, "I know it was the blood ... I know it was the blood ... I know it was the blood ... that saved me. One day when I was lost ... Jesus died upon the cross ... And I know it was the blood that saved me." Oh no, my brothers it's not hard to see the presence of the Lord in someones life.

But you know my brothers even with such wonderful expressions such as this one, there was a time in my life when I needed some assurance about the presence of the Lord. There was a time in my life when I needed to experience the testimony of someone else. You see my brothers I needed to experience the testimony of a chorus of witnesses. So I resolved in my spirit, "It's time for me to take a journey. " And then I set out to choose my destination. So it was right then and there I made up my mind I was going on a trip to a city called "The Word." And after choosing to journey to this beautiful city , not wanting any kind of delay, I got in my spiritual car and headed towards this place called ... "The Word."

It wasn't long after I began my journey when all of a sudden I had reached my destination. Being new in town and not knowing quite where to go I knew I had to ask for directions. A little ways off from me I could see a man who looked as if he knew the layout of the city well. To my surprise this man was an old preacher who was standing on the side of the road. I mustered up the courage to approach him and ask him for directions to my next stop. I said to him, "Excuse me sir, I wonder if you can help me. You see, I am seeking some testimony from someone who has experienced the presence of the Lord." The old preacher looked at me and replied, "Well, young blood, you need to start looking on a street called Old Testament Blvd. And then when you go as far as you can go on that street , you need to cross on over to New Testament Ave." So I followed the old preachers directions and began driving along this street called ... Old Testament Blvd. And you know as I was driving along I began to notice that something unusual was happening. I began to notice I was passing by ancient biblical neighborhoods like Egypt, Canaan, and Jericho. I began to notice I was passing by the residences of the greatest men in the Bible such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact a little later I almost stopped at the

house of Isaiah.

You remember Isaiah, it was he who prophesied that when Jesus would come into the world, “ the government would be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace.” But I kept my foot on the gas and drove on because I knew that Isaiah had never actually experienced the presence of Jesus, he only foretold of His coming. So I kept on going until I reached the residence of the great prophet Malachi. And on in the distance I could see coming into plain view the next street over. There it was, the street the old preacher had told me about. There was New Testament Ave. Has anybody here ever driven down Old Testament Blvd.? Has anyone here ever driven down New Testament Ave? Anybody here ever sought the presence of the Lord? Well, you’ve been in that city called “The Word”.

Now the next thing I began to do was resolve in my spirit, “I’m going to talk to somebody who has witnessed the presence of the Lord.” So there I was driving along New Testament Ave. when all of a sudden I came upon a certain house. The house was big and beautiful. The lawn was immaculately cut and the bushes neatly trimmed. I could see a Mercedes Benz in the driveway. Then I noticed a mailbox out in the front of the driveway which had a name on top. And there on the top of the mailbox was the name of Matthew. Now, I don’t have to tell you that I felt just a little uneasy about being at the house of Matthew. You remember Matthew, the same Matthew who had once been a greedy, cheating tax collector named Levi.

But I turned the engine off, got out of the car and looked around. Then after mustering up the courage, I walked on up to the front door and knocked on the door. And after a few seconds passed, a man wearing a business suit and an IRS badge answered the door. He said to me, “Yes , may I help you?” And I replied to him, “Excuse me sir, I’m looking for the man known as Matthew an Apostle of Jesus Christ. You see I need to talk to this man because it is said he was a witness to the presence of Jesus Christ.” Then he opened the door and said, “Come on in and have a seat.” I walked through the door and we made ourselves comfortable in the living room. We talked for a few minutes and finally he said, “Yes, I have witnessed the presence of the Lord. You see one day I was sitting in the tax collectors booth and Jesus came by. He looked at me as only He can and said, “Follow Me!” So I got up from the booth and followed Him.”

“ As we began on our way we came to a point where we became hungry and stopped to eat and while we were there the Pharisees began to question Him about eating with sinners and tax collectors. And the disciples of John began asking him about why we as His disciples did not fast. Then all of a sudden an official of the synagogue came and asked for the healing of a daughter he thought dead. So we went with the man to his house and a funny thing happened along the way. There was this woman who had been having an issue of blood for about twelve years. And you know this womans faith was so great that all she felt she needed to do was just be able to touch the hem of His garment and she would be healed. So she touched it and she became whole again. But it was after this that we approached the house of the official. And once inside we observed a noisy crowd of onlookers and flute players and mourners in the house. Then Jesus commanded every one to leave the room and after that He took the hand of the maiden and she arose at once. I had never in my life seen anything like it. So my good man if it is for this reason which you have come to ask then I can tell you, “Yes, I have witnessed the presence of the Lord.”

Now satisfied, I went on about my way. But I could not help but think to myself about what I had heard. I couldn’t help but think about Jesus and his healing presence. You see because this one woman had such a profound faith that she knew all she had to do was touch His cloak and she would be healed. And then He went in to the young maiden , a young woman thought dead, took her hand and she was healed. And then I began to understand that whatever your condition, you can trust the healing presence ... of Jesus.

It was not long after my encounter with Matthew that I was again driving towards my next stop on New Testament Ave. There I was driving along and seeking my next destination when all of a sudden I

came to a small house on the corner of the next block and on the same side of the street. The house though small in size was neat and personable in appearance. As I pulled over to the curve in order to stop, I noticed the name on this particular mailbox said ... Mark. So still inspired by my intention to speak to someone who has experienced the presence of the Lord, I again mustered up my nerve and walked on up toward the house.

Once I got closer to the door I noticed there was a youthful aura about the place. In fact if I did not know any better I could have sworn that I heard someone playing X-box in the background. So I figured the owner of this house was definitely younger than me. I knocked on the door and in a few seconds the door was answered by a rather energetic looking youth who looked as if he could be no older than about six-teen. He greeted me with a certain youthful eagerness by saying, "What's up?" Intrigued by the appearance of the boy, I said to him, "Excuse me, but I am looking for the young man named Mark." He looked at me as if he thought he was in some type of trouble and replied, "I am he." I said, "So you're Mark?" He said, "In the flesh." Then I told him, "Well, Mark, I have been driving all day looking to talk to those who have experienced the presence and power of Jesus. And an old preacher directed me here because he believed you once walked with the Lord." He said, "That's right, come on in and let me tell you about it ...dawg."

So I went in with him and sat down in order to listen to him. And after we were seated, he began by saying, "Yes, I have witnessed the presence of the Lord. You see I had been following around my cousin Barnabas and the disciple named Peter. One day they were with Jesus and I had been following them from a distance and then I saw a miraculous sample of His presence and power. It manifested itself in the life of a man who lived in in the cemetery and who had long been possessed by demons. I think his name was ... Legion. Anyway, this man would be bound in chains but the chains could not hold him. He would run between the graves cutting himself and screaming like a wild man all night and day. But one day seeing Jesus, the demonic spirits which possessed him, approached Jesus and asked Him what He wanted with him. All of a sudden the Lord commanded the unclean spirits to come out of him. Then the demons begged him for mercy asking not to be tormented. Jesus asked the demon his name and after he replied "Legion, because we are many." They continued to beg Him as if their lives depended on it and asked Him not to send them out of the country. And on in the distance everyone noticed a rather large number of hogs rooting around. So they asked Him for permission to enter into the herd and when they did; they startled the herd so much ... they ran down the bank into the sea and about two thousand of them drowned right there. In fact the herdsman were so mad they went and told every body in the town and they all came to see what happened. Sir, its a testimony you came for you have come to the right place because I have seen the power and presence of the Lord." Yes once again, I had gotten what I had came for.

And on my way to my next destination I began to think to myself, "This man had been possessed by a legion of demons." It occurred to me that the presence of the Lord was so powerful that even the demons begged for mercy. So then I said to myself, "Self, if the demons tremble at the mere presence of Jesus, what more do you need to hear?" It was then that I thought to myself, "Just one more witness and I'll go on home".

Not wanting to waste any more time talking to myself, I kept on driving in order to reach the next house. Then all of a sudden I came upon a big, beautiful, stately house. The house was so big it looked as if it could have been on MTV Cribs. In fact it looked as if it may have belonged to a doctor or someone else who was of importance. There was no need for me to look for a mailbox because there was a big iron gate which stood out front. The gate was open and sitting on the top of the gate was a big, gold letter in the shape of an "L". There was something in my spirit that told me I was now at the house of Luke. So again I mustered up some courage, got out of my car and began walking to the front of the house. And as I was walking I could see what looked like a vintage antique automobile. It looked as if it was a vintage Jaguar. The car was a convertible and in the back seat I could see a bag of rather expensive golf clubs. Then I said to myself, "Yeah ... this is the house of a doctor alright."

So there I was at the front door of the house of Luke. I wasted no time in knocking on the door. No one answered the first time and so I knocked again. This time after a about a minute a man dressed in surgical scrubs answered the door. He said in an anxious tone, "Yes, may I help you please." I replied, "Yes, I am a newly converted Christian, a babe in Christ. I came here looking for the man named Luke, the physician who walked with Jesus. I need to hear from someone who has been in the presence of the Lord. You see because I need to know if I made the right decision." He said, "I am Luke ,please, won't you come in so I can tell you my testimony." As I entered the house he led me to a room which must have been his office. It was there we began to discuss his experience.

He began by telling me about the first time he heard the greatest preacher of them all preach His first sermon there. He said, " It was there in a church in the town of Nazareth. He had just come back from preaching several revivals in Galilee. He strode smoothly to the pulpit and opened up the book and began to read His text. He said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He said, "It was the most profound sermon I had ever heard in my life. It touched me so powerfully because I knew Jesus was explaining His very purpose for being here and the reason the Father sent Him to us. And you know the most hurtful thing of all was to see the Lord rejected by the people of His home town. It was then that He went preaching to all kinds of people all throughout the region. So sir, if its a testimony you are looking for, I have no shame in saying to you ... Yes ... I have witnessed the power and presence of the Lord." And after hearing the testimony of Luke, it was then that I knew that I had heard all I needed to hear. So I thanked him for his time and set out on my way home, satisfied in my spirit.

And as I was driving on home I began to think about all I had heard throughout the day. I had heard Matthews testimony of the woman with the issue of blood and the young girl thought dead. I had heard the testimony of young Mark about the man who was filled with a "Legion" of demons. And I had heard the testimony of Luke about Jesus preaching to the saints of where He grew up and them rejecting the One who came for their salvation. Yes, I had heard all I had needed to hear. Now I was convinced I had made the right decision because there was no doubt in my mind and in my heart these brothers had been in the presence of the Lord. And because of the testimonies of these brothers there was no doubt in my mind the power and presence of Jesus is real. Yes, many have witnessed the power and the presence ... of Jesus!

So we as Christians, as babes in Christ, must be diligent in our efforts to find the power and presence of the Lord in our lives. We have a road map that will take us directly to the power source. We have a road map that will take us directly to the living presence of Jesus. All we have to do is be willing to travel the biblical highway. We have to be willing to drive to that faithful city called "The Word." We have to be willing to drive down Old Testament Blvd. We have to be willing to drive down New Testament Ave. Because right there we will find the presence of the Lord. And right there we will find out Jesus lives.

So my brothers as I close, let me encourage you to seek the presence of the Lord. Let me encourage you to listen to the saints that make up the chorus of witnesses. Let me encourage you to lean on someone who can testify of the power and presence of Jesus. Because we have testimonies today and we know many have witnessed His presence. I don't know about you but I can testify that Jesus is a way-maker. I can testify that Jesus is a lifesaver. I can testify that Jesus will forgive a sinner. I can testify that Jesus will take sickness and heal it. I can testify that Jesus will deliver you from bondage. And you ought to be able to testify about the power and presence of Jesus in your life. You ought to be able to testify about what Jesus has done for you. If He loved you ... you ought to be able to testify. If He delivered you ... you ought to be able to testify. If He saved you ... you ought to be able to testify. Because you're a living testimony and you ought to testify ... testify ... testify ... testify!