

Touching Heaven – Touching Earth

Tuesday morning bible study on prayer with Cindy Smith

April 8, 2008 Session 5

The Power of Testimony

Our reference Scripture is again James 5:13-16. Bill Johnson in his book Strengthen Yourself in the Lord has a powerful chapter on the power of our testimony which has much to do with keeping the faith for prayer. We can not underestimate the power of our testimony as God's word says "they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony". (Rev 12:10-11). When we declare that "by His stripes, we are healed," we are speaking of the power of Jesus' blood with our mouths.

Because we are kings and priests of planet Earth (Rev 1:8), we have a dual responsibility; to represent man to God through intercession and to represent God to man through proclamation and demonstration of the Kingdom of God. In Heb 7:25, it says that "Jesus always lives to make intercession for us". Jesus always said what he heard the Father saying and did what He saw the Father doing, and He is inviting us to join Him in representing God to man and man to God. The world needs to see miracles and demonstrations of the power of God that confirms the truth of His Word. The anointing that was on Christ is the same Holy Spirit that is given to every believer. We are anointed into the priesthood of believers to demonstrate what God is like through the miraculous intervention of God in human affairs.

What is a testimony? It is the written or spoken record of God's actions. It is a story, a report that adds breadth and depth to our family history. All the OT and NT stories are part of our family history-all the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 is part of the account of our family of faith. I said last week that our names are yet to be added that will qualify and quantify our faith in our generation. David declared in Ps 119:111, "I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart." We could also say they are the strength of my heart for "the joy of the Lord is our strength." (Neh 8:10) Testimonies are part of our inheritance and without them our faith is not complete. The testimonies of God are the tools that equip us to walk in our destiny to demonstrate what our God is like that we serve and love. Miracles validate our belief in God to a watching world. Testimonies reveal the nature and ways of God. They also bring us into more awareness of God and creates an expectation for God's manifestations in and through our lives.

The Hebrew root word for "testimony" means "do again" and so we gain the meaning that the works of God are meant to be done again in our lives because He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8) and He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Since the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, we understand that the prophetic anointing does not just declare what God wants to do, but also brings what is declared into being. The testimony releases this prophetic anointing. When a testimony is spoken, power is released to make that testimony happen again in the lives of those who hear it. The testimonies of God connect each succeeding generation of believers to His covenant promises. The testimonies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are also our testimony. If God

was their provider we can expect to provide for us as well. That word "sozo" in the Greek means a full salvation including healing and deliverance. Remember the emphasis that the Lord placed on the Israelites in teaching their children, recalling through the Feasts celebrated, His faithfulness. The testimony revealed His nature as a faithful, loving God. When they crossed the Jordan River, they built altars, piles of stones as memorials so that from generation to generation they could recall to their children the faithfulness of God to keep His promises. Testimonies connect the generations to His promises. Keeping their testimony helped them to "set their hope in God"-to keep His promises through miraculous invasions of power.

Our expectation of God determines our level of faith. We have to have faith in order to "keep His commandments", from "heal the sick", "cast out devils", to "love your neighbor". These commandments will only be fulfilled through the supernatural empowerment of His Spirit that comes through faith. God is the one who gave the Israelites the strategies and the strength to do the impossible. He is the same God who keeps Israel today though she is surrounded by enemies who want to annihilate her. Recall that when the Israelites in the OT stopped keeping the testimony, their faith for the miraculous diminished as did their obedience to His commands.

Recall in the OT, Psalm 78:9-11: “The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of God, refused to walk in His law and forgot His works and His wonders He had shown them.” They were equipped by God, prepared for defeating their enemies. Because they did not remember the testimonies of their fathers and if they had declared the nature and name of God as David did with Goliath, they lacked the courage to step out in faith which would have released the prophetic anointing to repeat those acts of deliverance. Because they had forgotten them, they lacked the faith and strength to possess the gates of their enemies.

It is mind boggling that we so easily forget what God has done for us. The process of forgetfulness happens gradually, a little at a time. It is a downward spiral that begins with our tendency to talk less about the cancer that was healed instantly. Our minds get cluttered with other things. But like the Israelites, the less we have it in our minds, the less we talk about the miracles, our expectations decrease to see the miraculous. I am not sure of what all is going on with me, but I have an insatiable desire to see God come through with miraculous healing, provision and deliverance. I have tasted of this in a measure and I am hungry for more. But we talk less, we expect less and then we experience less. I have friends with cancer that I want to see God touch now, not after they have endured weeks of radiation and chemo. We should be talking about the Cindy Brookshires who were healed of melanoma cancer, and the Raleigh Zooks who can hear without the anatomical structures to do so; the Marc Bectons who have experienced God’s miracles. Unless we remember what God has done and rise up in the faith provided by the testimony, we will miss the divine opportunities, for miracles and more testimonies which result in more glory for God.

The Israelites forgot and in the process lost their identity. I think in America especially, with all the family dysfunction, and dysfunction in the church, we forget who we are as well. Failing to keep the testimony not only makes us forget who God is, but who we are! Like Israel, the only thing that distinguishes believers from everyone else is the reality that God is Emmanuel. He is active, operational and always working among us.

When we lose sight God’s activity among us, we are no different from anyone else around us-with one serious ramification: we are accountable for the revelation imparted to us through the testimonies and for failing to keep them, we can be overcome. We rob God’s people and a watching waiting world of God-encounters when we forget how much the testimony of God in our lives matters to Him and we cheat Him of glory.

We need to establish a testimony lifestyle in our homes, at work, when we rise up and when we lie down. Journaling is one important way to remember. Talking about God around the table with our kids is another way. Making room for testimonies in the church service is another, which Pastor Carter does frequently. As we teach our children by testimony, we give them a spiritual inheritance. Just asking our kids, “what did you see God do today?” is a great question. It makes our faith relevant.

Bill Johnson had a great picture he said, “if I don’t stay aware of the God who invades the impossible, I will reduce my ministry to ministry gifts. All our gifts are like the sails on a boat. We can sit in the harbor (in church) and admire one another’s sails; but without the wind they are worthless! Our gifts are designed to catch the wind of the Spirit so we can accomplish what is humanly impossible. The testimony keeps our sails hoisted.” Bill shared the testimony about a video shown to his church of a little boy running around the church who had been healed of club feet. It so inspired some of the youth in their School of Ministry that they ran to the mall to pray for people. As they shared the video with a woman with a cane, she allowed the group to pray for her, and she left the mall healed, carrying her cane in one arm and her grandchild in the other. The testimony allowed God the room to “do it again.”

David said “I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.” (Ps 119:99) Like David, we need to meditate on these testimonies because they train our minds to think from the realm of faith. Ask God about the testimonies you have heard about.

As it says in Revelations we will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.

Next week please bring questions you have about faith and healing and we will answer them.