

THE CONVERTS WHO COULD NOT REMAIN SILENT
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And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel (Mark 5:20).

... go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter ... and they came to him from every quarter (Mark 1:44-45).

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ (John 4:28-29)?

The refire they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word (Acts 8:4).

Evangelism is the spearhead of the church's attack on sin. It is the secret of every advance made in the name of the Savior. Throughout the history of the church, God has sent gifted people to assist in the propagation of the Gospel. These preachers possessed special insight into the Scriptures and an undying passion to win men and women for Christ. Peter and Paul were the first of a long line of successors whose chief interest in life was winning lost people. The message delivered on the Day of Pentecost established and strengthened the church, for thousands of Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah. The first assembly was established, and later the apostle told the people in Ephesus that special gifts had been bestowed upon certain folk. "He gave some, apostles: and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). These talents enabled the early church to extend its ministry throughout the world. Peter was the evangelist at Pentecost, but he was followed by Paul whose missionary journeys took him throughout the Roman Empire. Every age has had its brilliant preachers. and Luther, Whitfield. Wesley. Finney, and others of their kind influenced multitudes of people. To that list Billy Graham and other modern preachers can now be added. The world has been enriched because of their ministry.

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It must never be forgotten that however wonderful these preachers were, they did not reveal the true secret of New Testament evangelism. The greatest outpouring of God's blessing became evident when the thousands of converts, influenced by Simon Peter, returned to their homes in other lands to explain what had transformed their lives. Great and famous speakers are always an asset, but they cannot compare with the impact made by individuals who tell friends of the risen Christ. When each member of a church becomes an evangelist, that assembly becomes an institution against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail. Four outstanding occasions mentioned in the Scriptures invite investigation. They supply an example which every Christian should follow.

Commissioned by Christ... How Suggestive
And when lie was come into the ship. he that had been possessed with the devil, prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit. Jesus suffered him not. but saith unto him. Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

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And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel (Mark 5:18-20).

The irate hog farmers of Gadara had made their choice: they had asked Jesus to leave the district. One of the men had lost two thousand swine, and neighbors feared a similar loss. They had no basic animosity against the Lord, and would have given Hun a great welcome if He had not interfered with their business. The men had worked long and hard to establish herds of swine, but within minutes Jesus had destroyed their efforts. They appreciated the deliverance of the demoniac, but not even his transformation could compensate for their loss. If the Visitor were allowed to continue, they would be bankrupt! The sooner He left, the better it would be for all concerned. "And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts" (Mark 5:17).

The former demoniac watched the proceedings and asked if he could join the company. but Jesus replied. "Son. I have a better idea. I would love to take you. but you can be of more value here. Your neighbors have asked me to leave: they believe

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it will cost too much if I stay. They will not hear me. but you live here. They will listen to your testimony. Go home to thy friends and tell them what happened. Tell them about Me." The Lord only asked him to tell his friends, but the man quickly found a much larger congregation. "And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel" (Mark 5:20).

There is no record that Jesus ever returned to Gadara, hut since Palestiie was a small country, people did not have to travel great distances to hear the Savior. Great crowds came to Christ, and perhaps many of those hearers were first inspired by the testimony of the demoniac. The Savior wanted His convert to inform others of his deliverance. He also depends upon us to tell others He remains unchanged.

Cautioned by Christ...How Strange

And there came a leper to him ... And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him . . . And as soon as he had spoken. the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away: And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man . . . But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter (Mark 1:40-45).

According to the Levitical law, a leper who believed he had been cleansed was required to present himself before the priest for an official examination. Real leprosy was incurable, but some of the other skin diseases could be cured. When this took place, official recognition had to be obtained before the leper was permitted to rejoin society. Certain offerings had to be made, and it was for this reason Jesus commanded the man to "offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them" (Mark 1:44). Unless the man did as he was required, he could be arrested by the authorities. Jesus was careful to remind the man of his duty. In addition, his testimony would carry the good news to priests who might otherwise never hear it. The cleansing of the leper was certain to cause great excitement. Thousands of people crowding narrow streets could bring

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danger to individuals and anger the authorities. Therefore, the Master wisely commanded the man to remain silent. That the man disobeyed brings mixed emotions to our hearts. The leper's disobedience made it necessary for the Lord to retire into the desert. His enthusiastic testimony hindered other sufferers who might have found it difficult to travel. There are times when enthusiasm runs away with brains! Happy and wise are they who know when to speak and when to say nothing. Enthusiasm is a fire within the soul. When it is controlled, it supplies warmth, comfort, and energy. When it is not, it becomes one of the most destructive forces known to man.

Captivated by Christ ... How Surprising

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? (John 4:28-29).

When the Savior was upon earth, women did not enjoy the privileges known in the modern world. Samaritan wives were little more than slaves, and those of ill-repute were avoided by almost everybody. The woman of Samaria had a terrible reputation, and every decent citizen detested her company. She had been married five times and finally consented to live with another man. It was not revealed what happened to the five husbands. They either died or decided they would be happier apart from the woman who had an insatiable appetite for male companions. Either she was compelled by law to draw water at midday or had discovered it was better to obtain supplies when spiteful people were absent.

She was now causing a disturbance in the streets of Sychar. Even the self-righteous were attracted, for many people were present, and there was safety in numbers! Her voice was loud, her excitement intense. She had met an extraordinary man who had revealed closely guarded secrets. How could He do this if He were not the Messiah? She said, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ'?" Her forthright testimony, glowing face, and evident sincerity aroused the curiosity of the listeners. They went to see the strange Man and later confessed: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

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That woman became the first female evangelist. Her testimony helped to convince an entire community that Jesus was the Messiah. Every Christian knows the story of Christ's visit to the well at Sychar, but many fail to emulate the example set by the woman whom He met there. Her shameful past was forgotten, and oblivious to the fact that some of her neighbors would criticize her actions, she was compelled to tell others about the Savior. Her testimony influenced the community, but that was not her primary concern. The way God used her testimony was amazing. The question might be asked. "What would be accomplished if He had the assistance of a thousand others of her type'?" Innumerable church members seldom speak about the Lord in the marketplace, the office, or even among friends. It is easy to sing: "I've a story to tell to the nations," but it is just as necessary to deliver the same message to the people we meet every day.

Captivated by Christ ... How Superb

As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into

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every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:3-4).

It should be easier for Christians to speak of Christ's power to save than to converse about politics, the weather, or sporting events. Certain people respect and honor vows of silence, but that should never apply to anyone whose heart yearns to tell the message of Christ. Every believer in the Savior is commissioned to become a witness, and that duty is clearly defined. When fierce persecution made it impossible to remain in one place, the early Christians sought shelter in other cities. When they were driven even further, they continued to speak of the Lord, and everywhere churches were formed, people saved, and the kingdom of God extended.

You Are My Grandfather!

He was one of the few who ever succeeded in startling me! He had rushed up a long staircase, taking the steps two or three at a time. His round face glowed attractively, and his eyes danced with merriment. He shot out a band and asked. "Aren't you Ivor Powell?" Rather warily I informed him that his deductions were

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correct. I was at his service, What could I do for him? His face immediately crinkled, and his eyes became even more mischievous as he half shouted, "I'm glad to meet you. You are my grandfather." He shook my hand as if it had been a pump handle, and, while the up-and-down motions continued, I steadily eazed into his eyes and wondered how long he had been ill! He enjoyed my bewilderment. "Yes, it's true. You are my grandfather. Pleased to meet you, sir!" By this time I was capable of expecting anything. If this were one of my grandchildren, he would surely explain the miracle, since I had no children! And having overcome that obstacle, he would undoubtedly tell me of his financial difficulties and ask his benevolent relative to have pity on the rising generation! I therefore waited for the worst. His words were like a torrent suddenly released from a dam. Sparkling, scintillating, entrancing, they tumbled over red walls and refreshed my waiting soul. "Mr. Powell, do you remember a fish and chip shop in Honiton, Devonshire'? Do you remember going into the back of the place to lead the assistant to Christ? Well, sir, he won me for the Savior. He's my father in the faith. See? And you led him to Christ, so you must be my grandfather. Glad to meet you. Sorry I can't stop. God bless you." He turned and fled down the stairway as if he were being chased by a thousand Philistines.

A fish and chip shop in Honiton, Devonshire! Yes, I remembered it quite well. The Pilgrim Preachers toured Devonshire in the summer of 1931, and at that time I was the junior member of the party. Twelve months earlier Mr. Ernest Luff had invited me to join "his boys," and thus had commenced one of the most delightful phases of my life. We did not have many friends in Honiton, but someone gave us the use of a schoolroom in which to sleep. We had to supply our own food, and thus after every evening service I went in search of that national asset for the hungry - the fish and chip shop.

There were several people waiting for the fresh cooking french fries, so I took my place in the line. The proprietor was a happy type of fellow. He talked incessantly to his customers, and they seemed to like him. An unmistakable shine was upon his face, and in true layman fashion I debated the cause of the glow. Homiletically there were three possibilities - chip-fat, hair-oil,

or radiance emanating from within. Of course, my thoughts were

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stupid, but at least they helped to pass the time, for those chips were a long time cooking. Then quite suddenly a whisper suggested that I should seek the cause of the man's shining face. I was truly staggered. for such actions would savor of lunacy. I dismissed the idea as outrageous. But the whisper would not be silenced. When he looked inquiringly at me. I gave him my order, and then added, "I like the shine on your face. You look like a happy Christian!" Immediately he turned around, and the glow intensified. "I am a Christian, and I'm very happy. thank God. Are you a Christian?" I assured him that such was the case. Then he asked where I belonged, and what I was doing. When I supplied the necessary information, he answered. "Young man, I'm glad you came in tonight. My assistant, who is cutting chips. is concerned about his soul, and I'm unable to help him. Perhaps God sent you to lead him to Christ. Will you try?" He told his assistant that I wished to speak with him, and there in the back room of the premises I led the boy to the Savior. Later, when I wanted to pay for my supper, the boss grinned and said something about the laborer being worthy of his hire. That was the only occasion in my life when the reward for preaching was given in fish and french fries! I have never met those fellows since that night, but the "grandchild" appearing at the top of the London staircase more than confirmed the fact that the babe in Christ has grown to manhood.²

1. Ivor Powell, Mark's Superb Gospel (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1985), 41.
2. Ivor Powell, Bible Windows (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1985), 79.

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