

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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GO, STAND, AND SPEAK ACTS 5:20 CODY WESTBROOK

The evangelistic tenacity that characterized the early Christians is one of the most impressive characteristics that scripture reveals about them. They were persistent in doctrine (Acts 2:42), focused on their goal (Acts 2:46), and bold in the face of adversity (Acts 4:13). They were serious about soul winning, and gave every effort to do it effectively and thoroughly. In the beginning chapters of Acts, Peter and John take a leading role. They had preached on Solomon's porch, been arrested and warned not to do it anymore, then discharged and immediately continued their work (Acts 3-5). After their second arrest in Acts 5:18 they were released by the angel of the Lord (Acts 5:19) and given this charge: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). This passage serves as a succinct but serious outline for their evangelistic efforts, and ours as well. It reveals their mission, their method, and their message.

Their mission was simple—Go! Jesus had told them to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The thesis statement of the book of Acts is chapter 1:8. There, Jesus instructed the apostles, "...and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." God's intention for the church is that "all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. 2:2). "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11), and "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). The message of salvation is so important that God wants us to go everywhere and preach it to

everyone. Today we are blessed to live in a time that provides us many avenues to accomplish his task. The gospel can be transmitted instantly around the world through the Internet. In only a matter of hours we can travel from one state or country to another. God has told us to go and He has given us more than adequate means to do it.

Their method was vital—Stand! To "stand" is literally, "to stand firm." The word is used to describe one who stands up to make a formal declaration. It is essentially a command to be bold. Peter and John had been arrested, threatened, and imprisoned. That would be enough to dampen the spirits of even the most fearless of proclaimers. Therefore, the angel's command to stand and be bold in their work was surely welcomed. Scripture is replete with the command for God's people to be bold, and examples of those who embodied it. Jeremiah was told, "Be not afraid of their faces for I am with thee..." (Jer. 1:8). Stephen stood boldly before a mob of angry Jews which ultimately cost him his life (Acts 7). Paul was bold in his rebuke of Elymas (Acts 13:8) and later wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (1 Cor. 15:58). The Devil is alive today just as he was in the first century. He does everything that he can to thwart our evangelistic efforts. He wants us to be afraid and intimidated but we cannot allow that to happen. We must stand firm in our conviction and our efforts to carry out God's work.

Their message was eternal—life! Peter and John were told to "speak in the temple...all the words of this life." Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Peter

confessed, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou has the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). The evangelistic message of the first century church was so simple yet so profound—eternal life is found in Christ! Peter said,

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

In our efforts to evangelize the world, their message must be ours. Paul said that the gospel is God’s power to save because it is the way that God makes men righteous (Rom. 1:16-17). Our opinions, philosophies, and ideas are powerless to save. The first century church “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). So must we.

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DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Clay Bond '03

The book of Proverbs gives us some of the best council when it comes to daily Christianity. Solomon said, Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).

The Godly life is truly the happiest and best way of life. God’s Word has been handed down to us to instruct us in this noble pursuit (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

To help us better understand the nature of the Christian life, the Scriptures describe it as a race in which we are competitors (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). In keeping with the athletic theme, the writer of Hebrews encourages each Christian to set aside “*every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*” (Hebrews 12:1). As Christians our goal in life must be to finish this all important race. I’d like to share three things that you may find helpful.

First of all, we need to **Improve Our Concept of God**. Having the proper concept of God carries us through this race. The last thing we need to have in our minds is that God hates us, or that He wants us to fail so He can condemn us to be eternally lost. A false concept of God kept a whole generation of Israelites from entering the Promised Land. The idea that God

was against them sealed their fate and can also withhold God’s great blessings from us (Hebrews 3:17-19).

God loves us and wants us to be saved (1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9). He isn’t looking for ways to trip us up, nor is He trying to entice us to sin so that He can punish us (James 1:12). It is not God’s desire to see His children do a face plant on the race track of life. The Scriptures declare boldly that God is for us (Romans 8:31).

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand (Psalms 37:23-24).

Not only is He our help and guide as we face the challenges of life, He is the One who lifts us up in our inevitable moments of failure.

A second thing that helps us to finish the Christian race is to **Renew Our Confidence**. It takes confidence to live as a Christian. Satan has a dual purpose in mind here. First, he wants to convince us that we don’t have what it takes to be faithful. If that doesn’t work, plan B is to get us to put our confidence in ourselves. This is what many of the Christians at Laodicea did. They said, “*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*” (Revelation 3:17). Being over confident in ourselves leads to a state of independence from God. We could call this self-dependence. This reliance on our own righteousness leads to spiritual failure. Being overconfident in self is actually a misplaced faith which causes unfaithfulness toward God. The source of spiritual failure for many is simply an over confidence in self and a lack of confidence in God!

Renewing confidence is trusting that “*the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken*” (Proverbs 3:26). When our confidence is in the Lord we understand that He will help us overcome anything that gets in our way as we run the Christian race. He is the one who keeps us from falling and presents us “*faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*” (Jude 24). Renewal happens day by day as we grow in the knowledge of God’s Word (2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10). Renewing our confidence allows us to approach life with boldness and do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Finally, we can finish the Christian race by **Improving Our Commitment**. No matter how committed we are there’s always room for improvement. We are supposed to be “*fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*” (Romans 12:11). If we are NOT totally committed to

servicing the Lord, we will find it hard, perhaps impossible, to be faithful to Him. Who then is a faithful and wise servant? The one whom the Lord finds doing when He comes (Matthew 24:45). A Christian who is totally committed is not going to give in to discouragement and distraction. He's going to finish his race like the Apostle Paul, whose commitment to live for Christ every day enabled him to finish his course (Philippians 1:21; 2 Timothy 4:7). If you want to finish your race, commit to grow in your knowledge of God's word (2 Peter 3:18).

As you improve your concept of God, you will find that you desire to know more about Him. As you learn who God truly is, your confidence as you run the Christian race will be renewed. As you run hard toward the finish line, you will find yourself becoming more and more committed to serving Christ (Philippians 3:13-14).

This marathon is not easy, nor is it free of challenges and hurdles. There is much for us to overcome. At times we will get tripped up. We may even fall, but we have to get back on our feet and keep pressing toward that finish line (Philippians 3:14). The wise man said, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Proverbs 24:16). No matter what challenges we face, the determination that we can do this in Christ is what keeps us faithful until the end (Revelation 2:10). We have to be resolute that when we fall we are going to get back up and finish what we started. He has what it takes to carry you through the race. **Do you have what it takes?**

The Defender, Mt. Vernon Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, December 24, 2017.

SW

SOCIAL UNREST

Kevin W. Rhodes

The pervasiveness of decay in today's society pounds a steady drumbeat of immorality threatening not only to destroy the culture but more specifically to undermine the very essence of truth. Under such circumstances, the faithful struggle to maintain their place and even their identity amongst the onslaught of negativity hurled against Christianity and morality in general. As frustration with the environment builds, so does the inner cry for God to do something about it, and so God's people today can appreciate Asaph's plea opening Psalm 83, "Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, And do not be still, O God!" (Psa. 83:1).

The enemies that rose up against Israel displayed a hatred toward God and His people which serves as a reminder of the relationship between darkness and light (Psa. 83:2). Likewise, the foes we face have many faces and come from various directions, and the combination of their efforts wears down the resolve of the weak (Psa. 83:5-8). It feels much like a conspiracy against all that it is right as Satan and his cohorts "have taken crafty counsel against" God's people (Psa. 83:3). They want to eliminate godly influence and the role of faith that challenges their godlessness (Psa. 83:4). However, their ignorance reveals their weakness. They do not realize the power of God that fuels the fire of faith. Therefore, even in tumultuous times the godly can have confidence that God can overcome them today just as swiftly and surely as He did in the past. The means may differ (Psa. 83:9-10), but their end will follow the same path of all those who presumptuously opposed Jehovah (Psa. 83:11-12). They boast in their wickedness in the moment, but God will destroy their works in the end. They will not stand against His Word forever but will perish in their pride (Psa. 83:13) and flee with fear when the LORD rises up to defend His cause (Psa. 83:14-15). However, despite all the evil they have done, the divine desire remains "That they may seek Your name, O LORD" (Psa. 83:16). It is not vengeance we seek against our enemies but indeed their own salvation, if they will but listen. For if they reject God and His will, they will "be confounded and dismayed forever;" they will "be put to shame and perish" (Psa. 83:17). For in the end, God will be glorified, and all will acknowledge that Jehovah and Jehovah alone is "the Most High over all the earth" (Psa. 83:18).

Thus, while God's people today justly speak out with righteous indignation as the forces of darkness led by the prince of the power of the air lead wave after wave of desolation against righteousness, relentlessly charging into the fray to bring down the godly standards that provide the support for society and prevent anarchy, the opposition of Christians must be more than an effort to repel the attack; it should also persevere ever onward in pushing the truth forward so that even our enemies might come to seek God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Therefore, may our prayer, even regarding our most virulent foes, be for their correction and salvation. May God defeat their works, and may God's people win them over to the truth.

From Faith to Faith, Granbury Street Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, October 22, 2017.

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Record for the Week of May 12, 2019

Bible Class	145
Morning Assembly.....	209
Evening Assembly	161
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Charles Houston is scheduled for back surgery at South Austin Hospital, Monday, May 13th.

Kara Siebert is scheduled for surgery May 16th at 10 am.

Health Concerns: Lois Ewald, Tom Hanks, Debra Johnson, Betty Kellsmurphy, Diana Rodriguez, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cheri Sarten, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

GO PAPERLESS

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Tuesday, 10:00 am (September-May), Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes | Wednesday, Bible Classes, 7:00 pm

RADIO PROGRAM – *The Word of Life* | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life