

## Home Group Series 2024

### 9. Witness with Perseverance.

One of the striking things about Paul's preaching of the Gospel are those occasions when large numbers turned to Christ. For example, it seems that his work in the great city of Ephesus influenced the whole province, a phenomenon that nowadays we would call 'revival'. So why doesn't it happen now? Let me tell you a story.

Once upon a time, in a boys' grammar school in Surrey, a small group of lads met together each week for their Christian Union which, because they had no support from any staff, they led themselves. Nothing much seemed to happen, until one day they acquired some books describing what was taking place at that time in East Africa. They read that, as in the Book of Acts, large numbers, literally hundreds and more, were believing in Christ. There was great repentance, as the lives of people were fundamentally changed by the Spirit of God moving across the country. As the boys read on, they learned that it had all begun in a prayer meeting, with people beseeching God to visit their land.

Now these youngsters, at the weekends, got their spiritual food from two large evangelical churches, one Anglican, the other Baptist, but they weren't theologians! However, they bargained like this: "If God by His Spirit could do that there, why couldn't He do it for our school now?" So they began praying for their school – earnestly! They prayed in their lunch hour, they prayed after school, they prayed at break time, they prayed through their half term holiday...

One of them was an Air Cadet and he arranged for a visit from an ex-wing commander, who gave them not just an evening about flying but, because he was a committed Christian, he shared the Gospel with them too. One boy was very moved by what he heard, so much so that he went along to the Friday Christian Union next day, where the same guest was due to speak again. This time the youngster gave his life to Christ. So, the group leaders asked their visitor to come back after the weekend for four lunchtime talks – during which the blessing broke! By the end of that week, about 40 boys had given their lives to Christ!

The visitor had to leave the leaders to do what they could, counselling and teaching their new converts the basics of the Christian life, and the blessing rolled on – until, in a school numbering about 500, a good third began attending the Christian Union, with boys coming to faith almost daily. It was a time of God's blessing, of gifting, of healing, of answered prayer. It changed the atmosphere of the place.

I know because I was there.

Of course, the staff didn't like it one bit. They called us in to find out what was going on. As far as they were concerned, it was unhealthy religious extremism. We told them what we knew – that God was at work in their school. None of them were converted, but as schoolboys couldn't be punished for praying, the worst they could say to us is that we were having too many prayer meetings!

As far as we were concerned it was something we would never forget. It certainly changed our lives. It left two of three of us preachers! And since then, as I've seen the results of Revival here and there around the world, I find myself saying "Do it again, Lord!"

I'm an old theologian now, but I can't think of leaving you anything better than:

"If God could do that for that school, then He could do it for our church now."

Let's get praying!

JB



# Questions for Home Groups

## 9. Witness with Perseverance

**Hebrews 12 v1-3, Acts 28 v11-16,30,31**

- As we come to the end of the sermon series on Witnessing, what have you learnt and what has encouraged you to be a witness for Jesus?
- We have been looking at the book of Acts throughout this series. The book is also referred to as the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit.' Jesus told the first disciples that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to be witnesses. How does the Holy Spirit help you to be a witness to Jesus?
- What does it mean to you to have a 'great cloud of witnesses' cheering you on as you run your race in following Jesus and doing his will? (Hebrews 12 v1)
- What are the things that hold us back from persevering in following Jesus wholeheartedly, and hinder us from being effective witnesses for him?
- How do we 'throw off everything that hinders'? (Hebrews 12 v1)
- What was it that motivated Jesus to persevere in what the Father had called him to do, despite opposition and persecution? Hebrews (12 v2-3)
- Jesus said to his disciples: 'by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' (John 13 v35)
- We are called to be members of the Body of Christ where we love on another. A fellowship where there are divisions is not an effective witness. Are there things that we as a church fellowship need to address to ensure we are loving, accepting and welcoming of all?
- What does it mean to 'fix your eye on Jesus'?