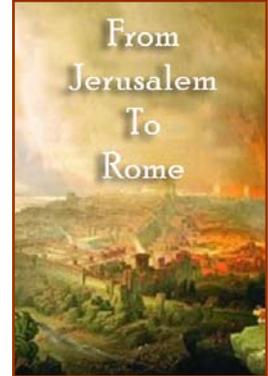


FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

Acts 1:6-8



The book of Acts teaches us much about the growth of the early church. It fills the gap that would exist between the Gospels and the book of Romans. At the end of the Gospels we find a handful of Jews gathered in Jerusalem talking about a kingdom to come to Israel. In the book of Romans we find an apostle who is not even mentioned in the Gospels, and who was not one of the twelve, writing to a band of Christians in the capital city of Rome, talking about going to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts tells us how this happened, and why this change occurred.



The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, (Acts 1:1 NASB)

This tells us that the Gospel of Luke (the first account) was about what Jesus "began" to do and teach. The Book of Acts (volume two of Luke's work) is about what the risen, living, reigning Christ continues to do and teach through His Spirit and His Apostles. The twelve are carrying on the ministry of Christ. The Gospel leads up to His [resurrection](#) and [ascension](#). The Acts starts from those glorious facts and develops their consequences until the end:

until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. ³ to these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:2-3 NASB)

The word "[apostle](#)" means: "*sent one*". They were men under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. During this **forty day** period, Jesus was teaching them about the Kingdom of God. Let's go to Luke 24 and see something very important that happened during this forty day period:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (Luke 24:44-45 NASB)

So Luke tells us in Luke 24:45, that Jesus *opened their minds to understand the Scriptures* and he tells us in Acts 1 that during this time he was teaching them about the Kingdom of God. So would you think that they now have a correct understanding about the Kingdom of God? I would think so!

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5 NASB)

What did he mean by, "*what the Father had promised*"? He meant several things. First, he indicates that the Holy Spirit's coming would not be ritual but reality. John, he said, baptized with water. That is a ritual, a shadow, a picture. But the reality will be the actual Spirit Himself, coming to live in you.

"*What the Father had promised*" is a reference to the promise that God made to Abraham two thousand years earlier. We find that promise in:

And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall

be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3 NASB)

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he tells us very explicitly what the blessing consisted of:

in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:14 NASB)

This baptism of the Spirit joins us to Christ:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13 NASB)

Being united with Christ by the Spirit and being made one with Him is what the coming "baptism in the Holy Spirit" would accomplish. It would make them one with the risen Christ, as members of His risen body.

So Jesus tells them to wait for the promise of the pouring out of the Spirit, which they know happens in the last days and brings in the [Kingdom of God](#). When they hear the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, they ask:

And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6 NASB)

The apostles were familiar with [Ezekiel 36](#) and [Joel 2](#), which says that the Kingdom will come when the Holy Spirit is poured out in last days. When they heard Christ say the Holy Spirit would come soon ([v. 5](#)), they naturally thought of the Kingdom.

The entire Bible is the story of the prediction, rehearsal, arrival, and consummation of the Kingdom of God. So we need to have an understanding of what the Kingdom of God is. This is an important subject, so let's ask and answer some questions regarding the Kingdom of God.

When did the Kingdom of God come? Their question, "*Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?*"—indicates that the Kingdom was not yet established.

Jesus is the king; so the time at which He became a king is the time at which "the Kingdom of God" began. It was after His death, and not during His natural life, that He was made a king. It was after His resurrection and His ascension to heaven that He was made a king. Notice what Paul wrote:

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (Philippians 2:8-9 NASB)

It was then that the Kingdom of God was inaugurated in heaven. But when did it begin to be administered on earth? It began, of course, with the first administrative act on earth, and this was the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of [Pentecost](#). On that occasion, Peter says:

"This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³ "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (Acts 2:32-33 NASB)

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36 NASB)

The constant preaching of John, of Jesus, and of the Seventy, was, **“The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** At hand is the Greek word *eggizo* [elgizw], which means: *“is near.”* The Kingdom was inaugurated in heaven when Jesus was coroneted, and it began to be formally administered on earth on the next succeeding Pentecost.

What is a kingdom? It is customary to speak of a kingdom (*basileia* basil eiā) as being made up of two component parts:

1. *An authority to rule*
2. *The realm or territory over which the king’s reign is exercised.*

Vine, for example, speaks of the kingdom as being:

1. *Sovereignty, royal power, dominion*
2. *The territory or people over whom a king rules*

Strong similarly states that the kingdom consists of:

- *Royal power, kingship, dominion, rule; and the territory subject to the rule of a king.*

The Kingdom of God is the rule or reign of God. The rule of God where?

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36 NASB)

It is a spiritual, not geographic kingdom. God reigns in the hearts of people! What do you need to have a kingdom? Only two necessary components: a king and subjects. You don't need a geographic realm.

The idea of “kingdom” in both Testaments is primarily dynamic rather than spatial. It is not so much a kingdom with geographic borders as it is a “kingdominion,” or reign. In the Scriptures, the spatial meaning of kingdom is secondary and derivative. The Kingdom of God or Kingdom of heaven is, quite simply, the rule and reign of God. Christianity is the Kingdom of God.

To be born again is to be a Kingdom citizen:

***For He delivered us* (saints - Colossians 1:2) *from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,* (Colossians 1:13 NASB)**

All believers, and only believers, are Kingdom citizens.

The spiritual nature of the Kingdom is easy to understand if you see that the Kingdom is the Church. **I believe that the Kingdom and the Church are synonymous.** The two words are used as synonyms in Matthew:

***"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* (Matthew 16:18-19 NASB)**

Here Jesus discusses the kingdom and the Church almost in the same breath. Jesus tells Peter, ***“I will build by My Church, and I’m going to give you authority in the Kingdom.”*** When Jesus told Peter He was giving him authority in the Kingdom, was Peter being given power of something that he would never exercise? Would this exercise of power not happen in his life time?

So, we see that the Kingdom was set up in the first century. During the first century, the Kingdom was inaugurated, but “not yet” consummated:

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; (Hebrews 12:28 NASB)

The word “receive” is from the Greek word *paralambano* [para lamba/nw], and it is in the present tense showing progression. The Kingdom was being brought into its fullness during the first century by progression. This *“Kingdom which cannot be shaken”* is the Church of Jesus Christ, it is the New Covenant, it is Mount Zion the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Kingdom was fully consummated in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple:

"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city;²² because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. (Luke 21:21-22 NASB)

Luke tells us that in the destruction of Jerusalem all prophecy was fulfilled.

"Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.³² Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. (Luke 21:31-32 NASB)

Luke ties the destruction of Jerusalem with the appearance of the Kingdom. He also states the Kingdom will arrive in its consummated state before that generation standing there dies off.

So the answer to the question, “When is the Kingdom to come?”—it was inaugurated at Pentecost, and it was consummated when Christ came in judgment on Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Kingdom of God is the Church! And all Christians are Kingdom citizens.

And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6 NASB)

This is what the book of Acts is all about—the redemption, restoration, or resurrection of Israel. As the Gospels end Jesus has been rejected by the Jewish leadership, they have put Him to death. They killed their Messiah, so now what happens to all the promises made to Israel? Does God stop with Israel and turn to the church as the Dispensationalists teach? No! As we have seen in our last two studies, Israel was a type and all of her promises were fulfilled in Christ and His body the Church. Believers, we are true Israel and inheritors of all of God’s promises. The Church is the Kingdom of God.

True Israel is all of those who have trusted in Christ. It includes the Old Covenant saints who looked forward to the redemption of the Lord and all New Covenant saints, those who have put their trust for eternal life in Christ and Christ alone. Physical, national Israel was a type that found its fulfillment in Christ. The shadow is gone, the reality is here. Thus the nation Israel, the Jewish people, has no special significance in God’s plan or purpose. It is all about Jesus and those who trust Him.

This is so important to understand because the majority of believers today hold to Dispensationalism which teaches that there is a distinction between Israel and the Church. According to Dispensationalism, God has two differing peoples, who each respectively have differing covenant promises, different destinies and different purposes. The Dispensationalist believes that the nation of Israel is God's chosen people, the sole inheritors of God's promises, and that to be a part of Israel one must be of the proper lineage and nationality. They say that God has postponed His promises and will fulfill them in the future in physical Israel. This view is wrong and very damaging to a correct

understanding of Scripture.

These teachers who want to hold a distinction between Israel and the Church just don't understand Biblical types and their fulfillment in the Church. We talked about types last week, but let me show you another prophecy given to Israel that was fulfilled in the Church—the true Israel.

I shall give thanks to Thee, for Thou hast answered me; and Thou hast become my salvation. ²² The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. ²³ This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ O LORD, do save, we beseech Thee; O LORD, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity! (Psalms 118:21-25 NASB)

This tells us about the salvation of the Lord who is to be *“the chief corner stone.”* This corner stone is also spoken of in [Isaiah 8:14-15](#) and [Isaiah 28:16](#). All these prophecies about the corner stone are spoken to Israel.

Now notice what Paul said when writing to the Church in Ephesus:

Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands-- ¹² remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:11-12 NASB)

Notice that Paul says they are “Gentiles”, and *“excluded from the commonwealth of Israel,”* without hope and without God.

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:13 NASB)

When is the “now”? In the first century when Paul originally wrote this. “Now” [then] because of Christ they have been brought near. Brought near what? The promises that God made to Israel.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, (Ephesians 2:19 NASB)

“The saints” here is referring to true Israel. The saints of the church are joined with the saints of Israel to become the true Israel. Notice carefully what Paul says next:

having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, (Ephesians 2:20 NASB)

What was the Church built on? The “corner stone”! Who is the corner stone? It is Christ. The anti-type of Israel's temple was the New Temple that was built on the corner stone—Jesus Christ, and the apostle and prophets. The New Temple is spiritual, it is the Church.

in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:21-22 NASB)

God told Israel that He was going to set up a corner stone, that they would reject, but to those who received Him became part of the New and Living Temple. This prophecy was given to Israel but fulfilled in the Church because the Church is Israel—the true people of God. Believers, all the promises of God are ours in Christ!

In response to the apostles question about the redemption of Israel He says:

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;" (Acts 1:7 NASB)

Jesus did not rebuke them for their question and He did not answer them “yes” or “no”. Instead, he said that this information belonged to the Father only. This is the same thing He told the disciples in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem:

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." (Matthew 24:36 NASB)

Jesus says that it is not for us to know the times or epochs. Times is the Greek word *chronos* [xro/nov], and refers to *any length of time*. It includes the other word, *kairos* [kairo/v], which means *opportune moments or critical, epoch-making periods*.

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NASB)

It is not for you to know the time at which I will establish my Kingdom, but you shall receive power to inaugurate it on earth when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

He tells them that they shall receive power. They are presently powerless. It was just 43 days earlier they had their first major test and they failed miserably. They could not have failed the test any more miserably. This is not 43 years later. This is 43 *days* later. When Jesus was with them in the upper room, they promised that no matter what, they would be loyal. No matter what, they would stay true to the cause. If necessary they would die with Jesus. And yet, just a matter of hours later when Jesus was arrested, they scattered and hid like cowards. **They probably had been hiding ever since.** Now Jesus is telling them He wants them to take this message to the streets and change the world. In order to do this they needed power.

So Jesus tells them that they will receive power—the Greek word is *dunamis* [du/namiv]. This is the word from which derives our English words "*dynamite*", "*dynamic*" and "*dynamo*." It is more than mere authority. *It's the power of ability*. We will see this power demonstrated in their lives as we move through Acts.

Then he tells them that after they receive this power that ***"you shall be My witnesses."*** The idea behind the word “witness” is that of being able to declare something experienced personally, to declare something experienced first hand. A witness has seen something with his own eyes. Therefore, he knows that it is true.

The Greek word translated "witnesses" here is *martureo* [martureo/w], from which we get the word *martyr*. In the early church so many Christians died for their faith that the Greek word meaning "witness" came to mean: "martyr."

Notice that this really isn't a command; it is a simple statement of fact: When the Holy Spirit has come upon you... you shall be witnesses of Me. The words “shall be” are in the indicative, not the imperative. Jesus wasn't recommending that they become witnesses, He was saying they would be witnesses. This is the same thing that God said to Israel:

"You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, In order that you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me." (Isaiah 43:10 NASB)

When we look at Isaiah 43:10 in the context of Acts 1:8; we see that we are truly Yahweh's Witnesses when we are Jesus' Witnesses. Because Jesus is Yahweh.

Believer, understand this; while our explanation of the Gospel to an unbeliever is made up of verbs, nouns, adverbs, etc., it is not like giving a speech on the environment or a talk on planting a garden. We use words and phrases, but we are dealing with something that is eternal and supernatural:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16 NASB)

The Gospel is the power of God.

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8 NASB)

The four circles of witness, mentioned at the end of this verse, supply us with an outline of the book. We begin with the witness in **Jerusalem**, and until the end of Acts 7 we are occupied with that city. Then in chapter 8 comes **Judea** and **Samaria**. In Acts 9 the man to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles is called; in chapter 10 a Gentile is saved and in Acts 13 the mission to the uttermost parts begins.

Remember that I said that the book of Acts is about the **“Redemption of Israel.”** God had promised His people Israel that He would redeem them. As the Gospels end, Jesus has been rejected by Israel. Then the writings of the New Testament are written to the Church. So the question is, “What happened to Israel”? What about all the promises God made to Israel? The book of Acts answers those questions.

Let’s look at the spread of the Gospel and see how it is in fulfillment of Israel’s prophecies.

The witness begins in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7)

It starts on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out. Is there a connection of what happened on Pentecost with Israel? It happened on Israel’s Feast day.

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. (Acts 2:14 NASB)

Peter is speaking to those of Jerusalem and Judea explaining the out pouring of the Spirit that they were experiencing.

"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: (Acts 2:15-16 NASB)

Peter says here that what they are experiencing was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Who did Joel prophecy to? Israel. Here again we see the prophecies of Israel fulfilled in the Church.

'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; (Acts 2:17 NASB)

When did God promise to pour out His Spirit? In the last days. So when did the last days begin? Pentecost! But Pentecost is recognized as the birth of the Church. Did the Church’s last days begin at its birth? No! **This is speaking of Israel’s last days because the Church has no last days.** In Joel’s prophecy, not only is the Spirit poured out, but judgment falls:

'THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. (Acts 2:20 NASB)

This is speaking of the end of the nation Israel—[her lights go out](#). Jerusalem is destroyed.

In Acts 7 Stephen preaches one of the greatest sermons in the New Testament. Stephen preaches that God has fulfilled His promises made to the fathers in Jesus. And He is about to come and destroy this place.

Their witness begins in Jerusalem and:

The witness expands to Judea (Acts 8:1)

And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (Acts 8:1 NASB)

So the witness moves out from Jerusalem, why? This is what the Lord told them to do so they were doing it? Not really, the persecution drove them out, and when they went they continued to preach the Gospel:

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. (Acts 8:4 NASB)

The witness extends to Samaria (Acts 8:5-25).

And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. (Acts 8:5 NASB)

The first example of non-Jewish conversion is in Samaria. Who were the Samaritans? History: The Samaritans were greatly despised by the Jews because of their impure blood lines and their religious deviations from Orthodox Judaism. Following the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722B.C, the largely depopulated region was resettled by colonists brought in by the Assyrians from various parts of their empire ([2 Kings 17:24](#)). They intermarried with the Jews who had been left behind, and the "Samaritans" were their descendants. The rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem brought opposition from the Samaritans, and eventually a rival temple was built on Mt. Gerizim. Ever since then the Jews had "no dealings with the Samaritans" ([John 4:9](#)), and the feeling were reciprocated.

Philip is preaching away in Samaria when an angel tells him to go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza. There Philip meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is reading [Isaiah 53](#). And the eunuch asks Philip:

And the eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?"³⁵ And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. (Acts 8:34-35 NASB)

Here we see Philip preaching Jesus, the Church's Savior from Israel's Scripture. In chapter 9 the Apostle to the Gentiles is converted.

The witness extends to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 10-28).

In chapter 10 the Gentile Cornelius is converted. Cornelius was a proselyte. The response to this in Jerusalem is: Why are we preaching to Gentiles? Beginning in Acts 11 they are going everywhere preaching the Gospel. Paul ends up going to Rome ([Acts 21](#)). The Jews of Paul's day called Rome the "end of the earth." This is the out-working of what Jesus said in Luke 24 and Acts 1:8. It is the story of the [preaching of the Gospel into all the world](#).

"To the remotest part of the earth"—this phrase is rare in ancient Greek literature, but it occurs four times in Isaiah in the *Septuagint* ([Isaiah 8:9](#); [48:20](#); [49:6](#); [62:11](#)). It seems therefore probable that Jesus would expect His disciples to connect the phrase with Isaiah, and recognize that He was saying that in witnessing to Him "to the end of the earth" they would be declaring God's salvation as expressed in Isaiah and proclaiming that He had now come to redeem His people.

In Acts 1:6 the apostles asked, Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Jesus responds by telling them that they are going to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The pouring out of the Spirit and the Kingdom of God are connected, and so is the proclamation of the Gospel “[in all the world](#)” and “[the end of the age](#)”. The destruction of Jerusalem corresponded to the end of the age, which corresponded to the consummation of the Kingdom. I think Jesus is saying: Israel will be redeemed when the Gospel has been preached to all the world. Verse 8 was an answer to their question in verse 6. Remember what Jesus taught them in Matthew 24:14:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. (Matthew 24:14 NASB)

The “end” was the end of the age which meant the destruction of the temple and the full consummation of the Kingdom of God.

Luke ends his second volume with Paul in prison in Rome preaching to the Jewish leaders from [Isaiah 6](#) which speak of judgment on Israel. The Gospel went to the ends of the earth and then came the end. **This book is about the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises to Israel.**

Jerusalem was where Jesus was executed at the word of an angry mob; Judea rejected His ministry; Samaria was regarded as a wasteland of impure half-breeds; and in the uttermost parts of the earth, the Gentiles were seen as nothing better than fuel for the fires of Hell. Yet God wanted a witness sent to all of these places.

Jesus’ apostles were faithful witnesses; they carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth. What about you? There is a sense in which every Christian is a witness. The question is, are we effective witnesses or are we a hindrance to the cause of Christ?

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