

GOD'S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Lesson Twenty-Three

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S CALLED ONES: FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Burden to Impart:

The love of Christ constrains His disciples to live unto Him for His testimony at any cost, even if it requires their lives.

Memory Verse: "...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Facts to Teach:

1. Jesus' last word to His disciples was a charge: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation" (Mark 16:15).
2. Now, after almost 2,000 years, the name of Jesus is known over all the earth, and the four Gospels are the most translated books on the earth, in over 1,000 languages.
3. At times those who believed in Jesus and the Bible were very much hated and persecuted. Satan opposed them and raised up fanatical resistance against them because they preached about the true God and the way of salvation through Christ. If the Lord's disciples were fearful of Satan's opposition and man's persecution, there would be no Christians on the earth today, because no one would know about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's witnesses needed to be faithful and firm to stand for Him at any cost, even their lives.
4. The Bible tells us what happened to some of the Lord's disciples, and history tells us what happened to others. John the Baptist was hated because of his honest testimony and was beheaded by the wicked King Herod (Mark 6:14-29). Stephen was a strong witness for the Lord. Because the Jewish leaders rejected his testimony they stoned him (Acts 6:8-12; 7:54-60). The Apostle James, the brother of John, was the first of the Apostles to die. Since he was a strong witness for the Lord, the Jews were happy when Herod had him killed by the sword (Acts 12:1-2). He died as a young man. His brother, John, lived to an old age through much persecution. As an old man he was sent away in exile to an island called Patmos (Rev. 1:9). The Apostle Peter was imprisoned and forewarned by the Lord that he would be killed (1 Pet. 1:14). According to history he was crucified upside down, refusing to be crucified in the same position as his Lord. The Apostle Paul was imprisoned and was killed for his testimony (2 Tim. 4:6-7).
5. Many of the Lord's called ones laid down their lives for their testimony. They were usually given a choice: to renounce their testimony as a Christian or to die. Some were left in prison until death (as happened to Watchman Nee). It was not hard for them to make their decision, for they had made it long before. If One had died for all, then they would no longer live to themselves, but to Him (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Their decision was this: whether we live, we live to the Lord, or if we die, we die to the Lord...Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Rom. 14:8-9).