

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

It is a great privilege to participate in this World Mission Report 2008 in Köln, Germany. I am always happy to come to Germany; it feels like coming home. My great grandfather Marstall immigrated from Hannover to America in 1889. Like many Americans, I am connected by blood, culture and history to the great continent of Europe, and Germany in particular. Most of all, I am happy to come to Germany because it is the birthplace of the first missionary-sending movement in UBF. It is the home of many great men and women of God in Christian history and in UBF ministry as well. What a joy it is to be with you. Let's think together for a few minutes about what God has done and is doing, and about God's vision for us and the world.

World mission is rooted in the love of God. God loves the world - all the people in the world. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son Jesus Christ as a ransom sacrifice for us. Christ died for our sins and solved man's sin problem once and for all. Then God raised Jesus to life on the third day. Christ's resurrection is God's glorious victory over the enemy, Satan, and gives all mankind a living hope in the kingdom of God. Whoever believes in Christ receives forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and the eternal kingdom of God. This is good news of great joy for all people. In his divine wisdom, God has chosen to spread this good news through witnesses. After his resurrection, the Risen Christ said to his disciples in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This was fulfilled just as Jesus commanded, as recorded in the remainder of the book of Acts. The gospel spread to the ends of the earth in the apostles' generation. Since then, the Holy Spirit has worked to accomplish world mission in succeeding generations, even up to our time. Let's consider Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, and learn some precious lessons in carrying out the world mission task.

First, the faith of the Risen Christ. When Jesus gave his command, the disciples did not appear to be promising leaders in world evangelism. They were unimpressive, and even tended to be petty. They were poor, not well educated, and had little experience with the world outside of Israel. They were susceptible to fear and spent a lot of time fighting with each other. They were nationalistic and really wanted to restore the power and glory of Israel. They looked very ordinary. However, the Risen Christ saw them as great apostles and evangelists who would change the whole world with the gospel. The Risen Christ saw them with faith. Likewise, we must see those whom God has called with faith that the world will change through them.

Second, the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course, the Risen Christ knew that the disciples were weak. But he promised that they would receive power through the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy

Spirit would drive out fear from their hearts and make them courageous. The power of the Holy Spirit would enable them to overcome selfishness and really love one another.

The power of the Holy Spirit would give them wisdom and strength to endure hard persecutions and difficult situations. The power of the Holy Spirit would work through their preaching to change people and would enable them to do many great miracles. The power of the Holy Spirit would enable them to master new languages and to overcome their Judaism, understanding and loving Gentile people from many different cultures. For example, Peter was once so fearful that he denied Christ three times. But when the Holy Spirit came upon him, he became a bold preacher of the gospel. Peter challenged the men who had crucified Jesus to repent and 3,000 people repented in one day; later, 5,000 people repented. Peter endured persecution with joy. Peter could overcome his lifelong habit of eating only Kosher food and began to eat sausages. Peter could love a Roman Centurion named Cornelius, a Gentile, and carry the gospel to him and his household. Peter experienced a miraculous escape from prison and received power to do miracles, even raising the dead. The Holy Spirit enables weak people to become powerful witnesses of the Risen Christ.

Third, “you will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth.” According to church history, Peter, along with Paul, were martyred in Rome. Through their testimony, sealed in their own blood, the foundations were laid to change the entire Roman world from a pagan to a Christian Empire. They say that Andrew was the apostle to the Russian people; that is there are so many Russians named Andre or Andrea. Thomas went to India and testified about Jesus. There are many Thomases in India. The gospel was spread to the whole world in the apostles’ generation. During the last 2,000 years there have been innumerable men and women who have carried the good news to foreign lands. In 1722, a small group of Bohemian Brethren, under the leadership of Christian David (a carpenter and a layman), formed a community. They found safe haven on the estate of Count Zinzendorf, who accepted them in Christ. Located in the Oberlausitz in the east of modern-day Germany, it came to be called “Herrnhut.” As persecuted brethren from around Europe gathered together, their numbers increased steadily. However, there was a problem. Their different backgrounds led them to form factions. Then a remarkable event took place. As they shared communion together on August 13, 1727, the Holy Spirit came upon them in power. They were changed. They began to love Christ and one another with all their hearts. They formed prayer teams which ran continuously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the next 100 years. They studied the Bible faithfully and wholeheartedly. They also began to love people they had never seen and to send missionaries.

The first Moravian missionaries were a potter named Leonard Dober and a carpenter named David Nitschmann. They went to the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean in 1732. Soon after, Moravian missionaries went to Greenland (1733), North America (1734), Lapland and South America (1735), South Africa (1736), and Labrador (1771). The fruit of these pioneering ministries is still evident today. The history of German and European UBF ministry is another amazing evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. It begins in Korea, where UBF founders, Dr. Samuel Lee and Mother Sarah Barry, taught the Bible to students after the Korean War. Whenever they came to the end of a gospel, they found the world mission command, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” At that time,

it seemed impossible for Korean students to obey this command. But through Bible study they learned faith that depends on God. They accepted the possibility that God would use them as missionaries. They began to pray for the pioneering of Southeast Asia. After eight years of prayer, in 1969, they sent one missionary to Singapore. However, when he was offered a scholarship to study in Germany, he left without saying “good-bye.” It was disappointing. Then Dr. Lee was inspired to turn their prayer direction from Southeast Asia to the superpower nations such as Germany and the USA. In July 1969, some Korean nurses were going to West Germany as laborers.

Dr. Lee met them at the airport and shared his vision for world mission with them. Some were persuaded, on the spot, to change their purpose from laborer to missionary. In June 1972, six trained Korean women missionaries went to West Germany. One of them was Sarah Kihyang Lee. They began to study the Bible with other Korean nurses, sacrificing their evenings and weekends to serve God. Many responded.

At that time, Dr. Samuel Lee left his fruitful ministry and his growing family in Korea and visited Germany to serve the new believers, coworking with M. Sarah Lee. As Dr. Lee taught John 1:4, “In him was life,” many began to find their true life in Jesus. They found that God sent them to Germany with a good purpose, to be missionaries. Dr. Lee supported this growing work by sending the best shepherds from Korea to Germany to marry these sacrificial women missionaries. Among them were Pastor Abraham Lee, M. Kaleb Hong and Dr. Peter Chang. Each of them pioneered a large chapter in Germany and served as the German and European directors successively until now. God raised Volker Keller as the ancestor of faith for Germany and blessed his life abundantly. God raised talented and committed German natives, Walter Nett, Andreas Krahwinkel, Eberhard Gross, Peter Schweitzer, Reiner Schauwienold as spiritual leaders and powerful messengers of the gospel.

The Risen Christ still wants to send his witnesses to those who need the gospel, such as in Eastern Europe, North Africa and Muslim countries. Sometimes Europe seems complex with many nations having many languages and cultures. But from God’s point of view, it is perfect for pioneering the whole world. European missionaries can reach English speaking countries, French speaking countries, German speaking countries, Spanish speaking countries. We know that the invasion of Muslim influence is a real threat. Some historians have predicted that Europe will be a Muslim continent within the next 50 years. However, this will not happen when we pray and receive the Holy Spirit and spread the gospel to all nations. God will bless Europe even more than before and make her a blessing to the world. We must kneel down and ask God’s power through the Holy Spirit. We must obey the Spirit’s leading, trusting in God Almighty. Then God will surely bless us to reach the whole world with the gospel in our generation.