

THE WITNESSES

John 5:30-47

Key Verse: 5:36

“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.”

In the last passage we learned the authority of the Son, that is, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Jesus has authority to give life. In John 5:24, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” All men are dead in transgressions and sins. Their bodies may be strong; they eat, sleep and exercise. But without Christ, their spirits are dead. Sometimes their behavior is no different from that of a reptile or a rodent. But when we hear one word of Jesus and believe in God who sent him, God’s life comes into our souls. The Spirit of God gives us a new life, a spiritual life, an eternal life. We can grow in the image of Christ. We can see the beauty of God’s world. We cross over from death to life. Jesus has the authority to give life. Jesus also has authority to judge. There will be a resurrection of all people, both the righteous and the wicked. Each person must stand before Christ to be judged. Those who have done good through the life of Christ in them will rise to live. Those who have done evil because they remained under the power of death will be condemned.

In today’s passage Jesus continues his message to the Jewish leaders. Jesus speaks in a way they can understand to establish the validity of his authority. Jesus introduces witnesses who testify that he is the Son of God. Though the Jewish

leaders were bent on destroying Jesus because they were under the power of death, Jesus made a life-giving effort to save them. Jesus really wanted to bring them from death to life. Jesus is ever working to give life to men. Let's listen to Jesus' teaching today about the witnesses. By believing the witnesses we can have eternal life in Jesus.

First, Jesus' judgment is just (30).

Jesus concludes his comments about judgment by saying that his judgment is just. Look at verse 30. "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." Jesus' judgment is just for two reasons. First of all, it is because Jesus' standard is the word of God. Jesus judges based on what he hears. What is it that he hears? It is the word of God. The word of God includes the entire Bible. Among all the teachings of the Bible, the Ten Commandments stand out as a clear standard of judgment. The Ten Commandments are the moral and spiritual law that govern God's universe. They apply equally to all people regardless of the time period or the nation in which they live. Secondly, Jesus' judgment is just because his motive is to please God. Jesus glorifies God in his judgment. Jesus is not humanistic, but God-centered. Those who do not live a perfect moral and spiritual life for the glory of God will not pass his judgment. In light of Jesus' standard and motive in judgment, we can be sure that no human being will pass by his own merit. Only the grace of Christ can save us from condemnation. For those without Christ, there will be no excuse, and no appeal. Jesus' judgment is just.

Second, John the Baptist's burning testimony about Jesus (31-35).

Jesus' heart was broken for the Jewish leaders. He knew they must repent or perish. Jesus began to introduce testimony that would help them accept him and have life. Look at verse 31. "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid." Here, Jesus acknowledges the restrictions of Jewish law that would not allow a witness to testify on his own behalf. The Jewish leaders were very familiar with this rule of evidence. Jesus spoke to them on the basis of their law, in a way they could understand, to help them accept his claim. Of course, Jesus' testimony is valid. Jesus is God. In John 8:14 Jesus says that even if he testifies about himself, it is valid because he knows where he comes from and where he is going. But here he says that his testimony is not legally valid, in accordance with Jewish law. Jesus was very humble in his way of talking with the Jews in order to bring them from death to life.

Look at verses 32-33. "There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth." Here John refers to John the Baptist. When John the Baptist began his public ministry there was a mighty work of God. The whole nation was stirred by his message and many repented of their sins, beating their chests. So the Jewish leaders sent people to see about John. They thought he might possibly be the Christ. John testified that he was not the Christ, and that the Christ was coming after him. John testified that Jesus is the eternal God, that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, that Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, that Jesus is the Son of God. John was a credible witness and he testified that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Look at verse 34. “Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.” Jesus did not need human testimony. Jesus is the Word; Jesus is God. But Jesus really wanted the Jewish leaders to be saved. Accepting John’s testimony would help them spiritually. For example, John’s disciples accepted John’s testimony and followed Jesus. After spending one afternoon with Jesus, they confessed that they had found the Messiah. In the same way, many village people accepted the Samaritan woman’s testimony and came to Jesus. After hearing his word, they confessed that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Human testimony is important for other human beings. It can be a bridge to bring others to Jesus. Of course, it does not save others. But when it leads them to Jesus, it is eternally precious.

Look at verse 35. “John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.” Jesus calls John a lamp that burned and gave light. John’s passion to testify to Christ was like a burning fire in his heart. It was not mere human passion, but the divine passion that was kindled by the love of God and the revelation of God’s word to his soul. John lived a pure life through which he could listen to the voice of God. One day God’s word came to him. God told him to preach a message of repentance and baptize sinners to prepare the way for the Lord. John gave all his heart and strength to do so. One day, as he was baptizing, John saw the Spirit of God come down and remain on Jesus. God revealed to John that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. After that, John clearly testified about Jesus. John urged his own disciples, whom he had trained with much effort, to follow Jesus. John gave his entire life, like a lamp burning brightly, spending itself completely, to witness that Jesus is the Son of God. John is a good example to us in being a witness to Jesus Christ.

We Christians are all called to testify about Jesus Christ. The word “testify” has the meaning of telling the truth at the risk of one’s life. It is associated with the word “martyr.” The early Christians testified boldly to Christ on pain of death. The blood of martyrs turned Rome from a pagan capital into the headquarters of Christendom. We must testify that Jesus is the Savior of the world and our personal Savior. We must testify with a life-giving spirit. UBF missionaries around the world are doing so. One woman missionary in a Muslim country studies at a religious training school for Muslims. She wears a cross around her neck to reveal Christ. This opens the way to share her testimony about Christ. Missionary Lukas and Maria Cho live in Colombia, where beatings and shootings happen around them daily. They risk their lives to testify to Christ. Through the election of 2004, Americans revealed that their greatest concern is about our moral and spiritual direction. The majority voted, not to obtain job security or health care, but for morality and godliness. We realize that America is in a spiritual war between believing and unbelieving people. This week a Wisconsin school board decided to allow the teaching of creationism as well as evolution. It has been met with heavy resistance. We must increase the number of believing people in America. We must testify to Jesus on our campuses with life-giving effort through fishing and one-to-one Bible study. When we share testimonies, we must not be superficial. We must glorify Christ with a life-giving spirit. May God grant us a burning passion to glorify Christ.

Third, the Father’s testimony about Jesus (36-39).

John's testimony about Jesus was valid, and it was enough to lead many to Christ for salvation. It should have been enough for the religious leaders. They recognized John as a light, but did not accept his message. So Jesus introduced another witness. Look at verse 36. "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me." Here Jesus says that the work he is doing is God's testimony that Jesus came from God. Let's review a few events.

At Cana in Galilee, Jesus attended a wedding ceremony in which the wine ran out. Jesus used the obedience of several servants and turned ordinary wash water into the most delicious wine. It was a miracle that revealed Jesus' changing power. Jesus taught his disciples that he came to change ordinary sinners into holy servants of God. Who can change another human being from the inside? Only Jesus can. Jesus changed Peter from an ordinary fisherman into a pillar of the early Christian church. Jesus has changed many ordinary people into great servants of God down through the generations. On Friday night we heard reports of what God is doing around the world. Pastor Mark Vucekovich just returned from a two-week journey to six UBF chapters in four nations in southern Africa. He met sacrificial missionaries and growing African shepherds and was a blessing and encouragement to them all. Once he was a man of sorrow. But he has become a great international shepherd. It is the work of God.

In the same way, Jesus changed a lonely and broken Samaritan woman. She was so bitter and hardened that her heart was like an iceberg. But Jesus deeply understood and spoke to her in such a gentle and truthful way that she was melted. She found her life problem was a sin problem. She had worshiped selfish and sinsick men of

flesh in the place of God, who is Spirit. She repented and began to worship God through Jesus. Her sins were forgiven and her wounds were healed. She became like a teenager, full of life, eager to glorify Jesus. That's not all. Before the eyes of the Jewish leaders Jesus had healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. The man was lying on his mat, complaining day after day. No one imagined that this man could get well. But when Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk," he was healed at once and began to walk around, carrying his mat. Who could heal such a man? It was the work of God.

God also testified to Jesus through the Scriptures. Look at verses 37-39. "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me...."

Time does not permit recounting all the Scriptures that testify to Jesus, for the whole Old Testament points to Christ. But let's consider a few significant promises of Scripture. At the very moment of the Fall of man, God promised in Genesis 3:15 to send an offspring from the woman who would crush the head of Satan and bring salvation to mankind. This promise was the hope of all godly people from that time forward. To fulfill this promise, God called Abraham to leave his country, people, and father's household and go to the land God would show him. God promised him, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:2-3). Galatians 3:8 says that God's promise to Abraham was really announcing the gospel in advance. God fulfilled this promise by sending

Jesus as the Savior of the world. The blessing that Jesus gives is the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life to all who believe in him.

In his right time, God raised David as the shepherd of his people Israel. God used David to unite the nation and to subdue all her enemies and bring a time of peace and prosperity. It was the most glorious time in her history. People must have felt that if only their good situation could last forever, it would be wonderful. Then God promised David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” When Jesus’ birth was foretold to Mary, the angel said in Luke 1:32b-33, “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” Jesus fulfills God’s promise to David.

Jesus is the Christ, the Savior King promised by God. Jesus became the Savior King by shedding his blood as the Lamb of God, foretold in Exodus 12. Whoever accepts the blood of Jesus is spared from God’s judgment, cleansed from sin, and made into a holy child of God. It is God who testifies that Jesus is the Savior of the world. God testifies through the work that Jesus did and through the Scriptures. Whoever believes God’s testimony and accepts Jesus as his Savior has eternal life and will not be condemned.

Fourth, unbelief is deliberate rejection of God’s word (40-47).

There was overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior King promised to come. There was the testimony of John the Baptist and the testimony of God himself through Jesus' works and through the Scriptures. The Jewish religious leaders should have accepted Jesus as the Son of God. But they did not. Why? Look at verse 40. "...yet you refuse to come to me to have life." They refused to come to Jesus. It was a deliberate rejection of Christ as the Son of God. It was a rejection of God's testimony. They studied the Scriptures diligently. But their motive was not to know Christ; it was to impress others with their knowledge and to gain a position in society. They did not love God from their hearts (42). They loved the praise of men (44). Christ stood right before them, but they failed to accept him and have life. Their unbelief was not an intellectual problem. It was deliberate rejection of God's word. They were too proud to submit to anyone, even the Son of God. They remind us of theology professors who don't believe in Christ and spread deadness to others, like gangrene. We must study the Bible to know Christ. We must repent before God's word and believe it. When we do so, we can have eternal life.

Today we learned that Jesus' witnesses are John the Baptist and the Father God. They testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. When we accept their testimony and come to Jesus we have eternal life. May God help us accept their testimony. We also learn that God wants us to testify about Christ to students on all of our campuses. May God help us burn with holy passion to do so.