

JESUS' TESTIMONY ABOUT HIMSELF

John 5:31-47

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 first part of this chapter, Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. It was a great work of God. But the Jews refused to honor Jesus. Instead, they persecuted him for breaking the Sabbath law. But Jesus still loved them and gave them this wonderful promise: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life" (5:24). Yet they refused to hear the voice of Jesus. They hardened their hearts.

In today's passage, Jesus continues to teach them and us why we should hear his word and believe him as the Son of God. He also teaches us about the consequences of studying the word of God superficially. May God help us to hear the word of Jesus and personally believe that Jesus is the Son of God!

I. TESTIMONIES ABOUT JESUS (31-36)

Look at verses 31-32. *"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid."* The Jewish leaders did not accept the wonderful promise of Jesus when Jesus said to them, *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life"* (24). They did not hear the word of Jesus. Nor did they believe in God who sent Jesus to save them. They were proud and stubborn. At this point, Jesus could have said, "Fine, they deserve eternal condemnation. Let them squirm on the Day of Judgment!" But Jesus did not give up on them. He tried to help them somehow to accept the truth and receive eternal life. How? He talked to them about testimonies and Moses, which was a familiar topic for the Jewish leaders. Jesus understood their legalistic mindset. In the Jewish court of law, at least two witnesses were required to convict or exonerate a person (Dt 19:15; Nu 35:30). So Jesus said to them: *"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid."* He was saying, "Okay, Gentlemen, I know what you are thinking. But my testimony is valid and you should listen to me, because there are others who testify about me."

Look at verse 32. *"There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid."* Jesus reminded the Jews that John the Baptist came as his witness (1:8). Look at verse 33. *"You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth."* When John's popularity grew, the Jewish leaders sent a team of investigators to John to check up on his credentials and to find out what he was up to (Jn 1:19-27). John took the opportunity to testify to the truth about our Lord Jesus. What was his testimony? John 1:19-20 says, *Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and*

Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." John the Baptist was so popular among his people that many wondered if John was the Christ, the promised Messiah (Lk 3:15). But he clearly testified, *"I am not the Christ."* He introduced Jesus as the Messiah. When John saw Jesus coming toward him, he testified: *"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* (1:29) John 1:8 says, *"The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."* John testified that Jesus is the true light for all mankind. John testified that Jesus came from God and is the Son of God (Jn 3:31).

At that time, John was the voice of God for the suffering people. Look at verse 35. *John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.* Jesus told them that John was a lamp that burned and gave light for a while. Many people came to John and heard his message of the baptism of repentance. They responded to John's message by repenting their sins with tears (Lk 3:10-14). Tax collectors repented their sins of selfishness. Prostitutes repented their sins. Even soldiers repented their sins of extortion and violence. But John's life of mission was cut short. He gave light to his people at the cost of his own life. He was beheaded for preaching the truth to King Herod and his wife. This way, John prepared the way for the Lord Jesus. His testimony was powerful because he wasn't afraid of speaking the truth. The Jewish leaders should have listened to his testimony about Jesus, but they did not.

John the Baptist was a powerful witness to Jesus. But Jesus had even more powerful witness than John. 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."* Jesus teaches that the very work that he was doing was a testimony about him. The work of God that he was doing was more powerful testimony about him than any person's words.

God manifested Jesus as his Son by enabling him to perform miracles. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus attended a wedding at Cana in Galilee. At the wedding feast, the wine ran out—a potentially embarrassing situation for the groom's family. Jesus blessed the wedding by turning wash water into first class wine (Jn 2:1-11). This event demonstrated that God sent his Son Jesus to bless his people.

One time, Jesus was traveling through Samaria. He was sitting by the well of Jacob, tired and hungry, when a lonely and thirsty woman came to draw water. Jesus reached out to her by humbly asking the question, "Will you give me a drink?" (4:7) Jesus really wanted to help her to taste the living water welling up to eternal life (4:14). Through his patient Bible study with her, she accepted Jesus as her personal Savior. She was so happy to have a new life in Jesus that she left her water jar and went to her people to witness about Jesus. She was changed from a sinful, despised woman to a powerful witness to Jesus. Many Samaritans became Christians because of her testimony, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." It was a miracle that happened to her life, a great work of God.

And how about the man who had been an invalid for 38 years? He spent every waking moments complaining bitterly about his life. Jesus had compassion on this man and asked him, “Do you want to get well?” Then Jesus commanded him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk” (5:8). For the first time in 38 years, this man could stand on his own feet.

What happened to these people was a powerful testimony to Jesus that he is the giver of life. The work of God through Jesus testified that Jesus is the Son of God. But there is more. The Scriptures also testify that Jesus is the Son of God. God promised to send the Messiah to save the sinful mankind. The reference to this wonderful promise is all over the Old Testament scriptures beginning with Genesis 3:15. The prophet Isaiah said a virgin would give birth to a son and would call him Immanuel—God with us (Isa 7:14). Isaiah even gave a vivid description of how the Messiah would suffer as the Lamb of God (Isa 53). Finally, Jesus came to this world as was promised. This was the weightier testimony than any human words.

Finally and most importantly, God himself is a witness to Jesus. Verse 37 says, “*And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.*” From the very beginning of his Messianic ministry, God was with Jesus. At the moment Jesus was baptized by John, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt 3:16-17). God declared that Jesus is the Savior of the world. If we really believe the word of God, we accept and believe in Jesus.

II. THE RESULT OF SUPERFICIAL BIBLE STUDY (37-47)

Look at verses 37-40. “*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, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.*” God the heavenly Father sent his one and only Son. And the Son was doing the life-giving work of God. It was God’s powerful endorsement for his Son. But the Jews refused to believe him. Rather, they persecuted Jesus and wanted to kill him. Jesus told them that their problem was their poor attitude toward the Scriptures. They knew very well about the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Most of them memorized these books, word by word.

However, they never heard the voice of God personally through their Bible study. They studied the Scriptures diligently, but the word of God did not penetrate their hearts. For instance, the Ten Commandments told them how to love God and how to love their neighbor. Yet, they had no personal love relationship with God or with their neighbors. It was because they studied the Bible superficially, only as a means to become a Pharisee or as a routine in their religious activities. If they had studied the Bible from their hearts, they would have known God personally and his heart toward his people. They would have

known the Son of God personally and accepted him as their personal Savior, as the Scriptures testified about Jesus.

This is not just their problem; it is our problem as well. Let us not be mistaken to think that this is someone else's problem. It can easily happen to us. It is easy for us to give more weight to what people say than the word of God. If we study the Bible with a poor attitude, how can we know the heart of God? How can we love him as he loves us? How can we have a deep personal relationship with him? We may fall into the serious problem of the Jewish leaders, that is, looking very religious outwardly but having no love of God in our hearts. The Jews knew a lot about the Scriptures, but did not even know God's testimony about his Son. This is the reason Jesus rebuked them severely: *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life"* (39-40).

A superficial attitude toward the word of God can lead people to all kinds of relative ideas about God. Some time ago, a local newspaper printed a debate over homosexuality and abortion. A church minister claimed that homosexuality and abortion are not "real" sins. He said, "The subject of homosexuality is not mentioned in the Bible. Jesus never mentioned it, and no prophet talks about it. The word is an invention of the late 19th century." These claims are false. Beginning with the book of Genesis, the Bible explicitly mentions this sin. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says: *"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."* Adultery is a sin. Greed is a sin. Slander is a sin. Sexual immorality is a sin. Likewise, homosexual offense is a sin. It is not a worse sin than adultery, greed or slander, but it is a sin. The point is that we must study the Bible as the word of God with awesome respect. It is easy for us to study the word of God relatively or selectively, accepting only the part we like, ignoring the others. That's what the Jewish leaders did. And the result was that they did not accept the Messiah whom God had sent to save them. They missed the whole point of the entire Bible!

There was another attitude problem that caused the Jewish leaders not to accept Jesus as the Messiah. It was their desire to seek people's praise rather than praise from God. Look at verse 41. *"I do not accept praise from men...."* If Jesus had been seeking for men's approval, he would have had a friendly relationship with the Jewish leaders. But Jesus lived for the glory of God. He did not do things to please the Jewish leaders; so he received many persecutions from them. The Jews were different. They really wanted men's praise. Seeking other people's approval is our problem as well today. We want to be accepted and validated by other people. This is addicting. So we often ask what others will think of us rather than what God will think of us. This is what the Jews did. They meticulously kept all kinds of rituals and traditions in order to impress the people of their community. They were very religious. But they had no love of God in their hearts (42). They didn't love God, nor did they love God's sheep. They were supposed to be shepherds for God's sheep. But they were busy with their own agenda. The invalid man of 38 years was their sheep. But none of them understood his agony. None of them even tried to help

this man. Instead, they persecuted Jesus for helping him. They made no effort to obtain the praise that comes from God (44).

Look at verses 45-46. *“But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”* The Jews prided themselves for their attachment to Moses, their great law-giver. So it was an unexpected thrust for Jesus to say that Moses himself would accuse them before God. They considered Moses as their defense attorney. But Jesus told them that Moses would be their prosecutor before God. Why? It’s because Moses wrote about Jesus and they refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Even the books of Moses pointed to the coming Messiah, that is, our Lord Jesus. Genesis 3:15 says that “the woman’s offspring” will crush the head of Satan. Exodus 12:21 refers to the “Passover lamb.” Leviticus 16:5 mentions a ram for burnt offering, symbolizing the payment of the price of Christ’s atonement, while Numbers 24:17 mentions a “scepter” that will rise out of Israel. Deuteronomy 18:15 says: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” Although these books did not mention Jesus by name, they pointed to the coming Messiah. So Jesus told them, *“If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.”*

In conclusion, we learned that there are many witnesses that testify for Jesus as the giver of eternal life. John the Baptist was one. God himself is the most important witness. The very work of God Jesus was doing testified on his behalf. Today, the word of God is a powerful testimony to us about Jesus. We must study the Bible sincerely from our hearts so that we may know the Son of God personally. May God help us also to be faithful witnesses of Jesus to young people today!