

“THIS IS THE TESTIMONY.”

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Scripture Texts: I John 5:6-13

Introduction.

Every text in I John seems to have its special word, a word that he repeats over and over. What is that word in our text? Testimony and testify, at least eight times.

Our text reads like a courtroom drama. John does *three things*:

First, he calls in three witnesses to give expert testimony to testify to the proof and validity that Jesus really is the Christ, Son of God who gives eternal life to all who believe, vss. 6-8.

Then, he contrasts the testimony of men with the testimony of God and give three reasons why the testimony of God must be accepted, vss. 9-12.

Finally, he sums up the testimony and makes his closing argument in verse 13.

The three witnesses that testify concerning Christ, vss. 6-8.

The first witness is the Holy Spirit, spoken of three times.

John 15:26 When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

John 16:13-14 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Romans 1:3-4 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is the particular work of the Spirit to bear witness to the truth, to teach us all that Christ said and to open our blind eyes and deaf ears and turn our hard hearts to flesh to receive the truth.

The next two witnesses called to the stand are the water and blood.

There has been a lot of discussion through the centuries about who these two witnesses are.

Luther and Calvin and other Reformers said they refer to the two sacraments, water is baptism and blood is the Lord's Table.

But blood is not the usual way of referring to the Lord's Table. Blood is just one of the things symbolized there, what about the body, the bread? If he had said the water and the wine or the bread and the wine, that might have made more sense.

Plus, there has been no other mention of or connection to the sacraments in this letter. And John says Christ came by water and blood. How does He come by the Lord's Table?

Others said the water and the blood refer to what came out of Jesus' side on the cross. But the water and the blood came out of Him, He didn't come by or through them. In John's Gospel he says the one who saw it testifies, not water and blood itself.

John 19:34-35 One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. 35 He who saw it has borne witness.

In I John the water and the blood are said to testify. And when John says not by water only, he seems to be countering some who argue for water only. So that would seem not to be referring to what came out of His side.

The most likely view is that the water and the blood refer to the beginning and the end of Jesus' ministry and work on earth, to His baptism and His death.

John is grounding the testimony of Jesus' earthly ministry in factual, historical events where there is divine testimony as to who Jesus is. For John these are the two most important and key events. This is why John doesn't start with the birth of Jesus, but with His baptism.

We see and hear very public, divine testimony at His baptism and we see and hear public, divine testimony at the crucifixion.

Matthew 3:16-17 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "***This is my beloved Son***, with whom I am well pleased."

At His baptism, the Father affirms that this is His eternal Son.

Matthew 27:50-54 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “***Truly this was the Son of God!***”

The sun went dark, the curtain tore in two, the earth shook, rocks split, tombs open. All of these very unnatural and unusual things testify, surely this was the Son of God.

What is the significance of these three witnesses giving testimony to who Jesus is?

First, OT law required two or three witness to establish a matter or bring a charge.

Deuteronomy 19:15 “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

John says there are ***three witnesses*** that give testimony to who Jesus is, one more than the minimum required by law.

Furthermore, while God says that we must have faith in order to believe, He does not ask us to have blind faith, to believe something that has no evidence.

There is evidence, there are facts of history, there are people, places, dates, events for which there are eyewitnesses.

There are three witnesses that all agree and testify. God bore witness to the Son at His baptism and He bore witness at the cross, accepting the sacrifice, and God bears witness now by sending His Spirit who teaches us all things and opens hearts to understand and gives faith, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The testimony of God is greater than the testimony of man, vss. 9-12.

John contrasts the testimony of men with the testimony of God and gives ***three reasons*** why the testimony of God must be believed and accepted.

First, if you listen to and accept human testimony about dates, events, facts, people and places, then much more you should accept divine testimony for God cannot lie.

If you read a history book and believe what it says. If a person turns on their turn signal and you believe that. If a friend tells you some news and you are willing to accept and trust him, then how much more should we accept and trust the testimony of God. Jesus is divinely approved by the God who cannot lie.

When we accept the word of man all day long in a hundred different ways, then we are obligated to accept the word of God as absolutely trustworthy.

Second, we have this testimony in ourselves, the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

I can testify to this when I surrendered my life to Christ in the summer of 1972. Before that when I read the Bible it just seemed like any other book to me, I understood the words, but it was nothing significant or powerful. But I remember noticing immediately after I surrendered to Jesus and the Holy Spirit came into my life, reading the Bible was totally different, it was like fresh manna, it was alive, dynamic, life transforming, my blind eyes had been made to see by faith what was there. It was true. It was the Word of God.

This was because of the inner work and testimony and power of the Holy Spirit.

And *third*, to not accept God's testimony is to call God a liar. This willful unbelief is a sin against God.

If you have ever wondered why faith and belief are so important and why unbelief and lack of faith are so bad, and strongly warned against in Scripture, here is your answer.

The Gospel is the greatest revelation of God's truth, and those who reject Christ reject the revelation of the truth of God. It is a mark of depravity that a person would deny the authority of God and reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit and consider God a liar.

Unbelief is not a trivial matter, not something to just be sad about. It contradicts the one true God. The ungodly are guilty of the crime of blasphemy against God because they charge God with falsehood, with lying. To be accused of falsehood is to rob God of His glory and deny to Him the honor due to His name.

This is why an unbeliever can be a perfectly wonderful human being, full of all the best qualities and characteristic, kind, compassionate, giving, humble, gracious, a model neighbor and citizen, yet he is a son of Satan and a child of wrath, his appearances of holiness are deceptive if he rejects the truth of God in Jesus Christ.

Luke 16:15 God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

We see the great external character, the great façade, but God sees the inner lust, pride, self-righteousness, independence. God sees the impurity of sin, unconfessed, unrepented of, loved, the offense against His holiness, the denial and rejection of His most precious Son.

Unbelievers will argue, like the Pharisees, give us proof. The problem is not proof, the proof is there and its good. The problem is sinful and unbelieving hearts. This is why unbelief is so grave a sin and brings down so great a judgment.

Verse 11 makes clear three truths and verse 12 makes clear a warning.

I John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

First, that apart from God and the Gospel, we are dead. There is no life in us apart from that.

Second, that God is the one who gives life out of His Fatherly love for us.

Third, this life is found only in His Son. We must by faith believe in Him.

Vs. 12 with brutal honesty warns us that without Christ we have no hope of eternal life, we remain dead in our trespasses and sins and in our rejection of God and the life He offers us.

John's closing argument, vs. 13.

I John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

This is the summary of his argument, of his letter and of all the divine testimony and revelation. It boils down the most important things, salvation and eternal life.

Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus the Son of God. And the essence of salvation is eternal life.

This is his purpose in writing. Listen to the difference between John's two purpose statements:

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written *so that you may believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

I John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, *that you may know* that you have eternal life.

In his Gospel John is writing to those who are not yet Christians and need evidence. In I John he is writing to Christians who need assurance. "You who believe."

God wants you to know your faith is real and rooted in testimony, in history, in facts, in evidence, in water, blood, Spirit. God has borne a faithful witness to this reality.

Implications and application.

I read those last verses at almost every graveside and when I read them, I read them with utmost seriousness. I am praying that someone there will hear them with the force of truth, that the Holy Spirit will awaken a dead soul to hear that most powerful and eternally significant truth.

When I read them, I am thinking there is nothing more important on earth to know. Nothing matters more than these words. Eternity is at stake.

When I am with a dying person I am aware that we are standing on the threshold of heaven. We are walking a loved one to the door. Oh, what we would give to catch just a glimpse of what is on the other side when the door opens, and Christ is there to receive one who has believed in him.

Oh, just to have a small taste of what Paul saw when he saw into the third heavens and had to be given a thorn in the flesh just to keep him humble, to keep his feet on the ground.

Oh, that we would all have a sense of how we are standing on the brink of eternity, that we would have a sense of the vastness of eternity, the immensity of it, of the supreme value of eternity and how everything we do and say should be lived in the light of that reality.

That we would have our eyes opened to just how temporal and trivial and temporary all of this is, it is just a wisp of smoke. Repent and believe the Gospel. Don't call God a liar.

There is only one thing that matters in this life and that is that you have eternal life in the life to come. Glory to God that it is possible to have eternal life and that life is in His Son. He who has the Son of God has life.

II Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

I John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.

Holy Father, thank you for the revelation of yourself, your Word, Spirit, those who told us, who bore witness and gave testimony.