

The Testimony of God Is Greater

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to 1 John. We're in chapter 5. 1 John 5, 6 through 12.

This is God's Word. This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.

And this is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is truth. Because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

And the three are in agreement. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater, because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

[1 : 05] And this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life.

He who does not have the Son of God does not have life. Let's hear the word preached. There are lots of ways that a case can be proven in court.

Physical evidence. Expert testimony. Video or audio evidence. Circumstantial evidence. Or even witness testimony.

That's just to name some. Well, in our passage this evening, John is presenting us with a case. And it's really a case that he has been presenting us all through his letter.

He's been telling us, Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. The eternal Son who became man.

[2 : 09] And to say that Jesus is anything less than that is to believe heresy. It is to, in essence, lead to hell. Life and death are wrapped up in this case that John is presenting to us.

And like a good lawyer, John has given us evidence in his letter. Compelling evidence. And we have some more tonight. Why should you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

Why should you believe in Jesus as the Son of God? And John's answer to us is this. Because the witness testimony is sound.

It is good testimony. It has no holes in it. It is not contradictory. It is rock solid evidence. So John gives us here three reasons this evening to believe this testimony concerning Jesus.

He's given us three reasons why we should believe what he has written in his letter. So let's look at those three reasons together. And let's begin with the first. Because it is the testimony of many witnesses.

[3 : 20] Because it is the testimony of many witnesses. Let's read again beginning in verse 6. Now I'm no law expert.

But it's pretty commonly known that witness testimony is not necessarily the most reliable evidence oftentimes in court. Of all the different kinds of evidence, if you as a lawyer only have witness testimony, you've got an uphill battle in your case.

Because this kind of testimony can be unreliable. People can think that they saw something, but in reality they didn't. They can be sure that the truck was red, but it wasn't red, and it wasn't a truck.

Witness testimony can let us down, because our eyes, they can play tricks on us. Our brains can believe that we saw something. We can be sure, I saw that person, and they were halfway across the country.

But we were sure that was them. Or we think something happened one way, but our brain misinterpreted what our eyes had seen. It filled in the blanks with the wrong information.

[4 : 47] We saw the defendant at the park, but the video evidence tells a very different story. Or our memories. Our memories aren't perfect. They can let us down.

Our senses are not flawless. So witness testimony, it's just not all that reliable in court, especially when you only have a single witness. Just one person who can give a firsthand account of what took place.

Again, they may not have seen what they thought that they saw. They may not have heard what they thought that they had heard. Or even worse, maybe they're intentionally lying.

Maybe they are intentionally trying to deceive the court, leading the investigation elsewhere. There are all kinds of problems with a single witness. And the Old Testament actually acknowledges this reality.

And so for statements to hold up in ancient Israel's courts, you needed more than one witness. Deuteronomy 19.15 says, 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.

[6 : 00] Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. So for the people of Israel, God put it into civil law.

You have to have more than one witness. And the New Testament abided by this principle. For elders who are accused of wrongdoing or of failing to uphold the duties of their office, the word of one person is not enough.

This is what 1 Timothy 5.19 teaches. Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

So there's the influence of God's law from the Old Testament coming through into the New. Or think about the gospel account of Luke and the eyewitness testimony of that.

It begins with Luke describing that there were many eyewitnesses to what he is writing. That bolsters his credibility. One guy didn't tell a bunch of stories about Jesus Christ to Luke and Luke is now writing down what that one guy said.

[7 : 10] No, many people, many sources relaying the same stories about Christ. And so Luke says this at the opening of his gospel account.

Many eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us. Delivered those accounts. Many. Not one. How about Paul?

In 1 Corinthians 15, as he's talking about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and he's giving evidence for it. What's the evidence that he puts forward? Eyewitness testimony.

First, he talks of how Jesus appeared to Peter. Then to the 12. Then to more than 500 believers. And he gives this point of clarification.

He gives this additional piece of information, most of whom are still alive. 500 believers witnessed Jesus, most of whom are still alive.

[8 : 11] Meaning, you can fact check me on that. It's not just me saying that Christ rose from the dead. If you don't believe me, go ask all of those people who are still living today.

Or go ask Peter. Or go ask the 12. Go ask as many of them as you would like. Why? Because what they say lines up with what Paul is saying.

They will testify to the same truth. So we have good evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We're not talking about just two eyeballs. We're literally talking about a thousand eyeballs.

Jesus himself in John 5:31 said, If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true.

Now let's be clear. His testimony is true. It's not that his testimony is false. It is true. A lack of other witnesses doesn't make it any less true.

[9 : 15] Jesus only spoke the truth. There was no falsehood in him. His word was always reliable. It was always true. But people, to their own detriment, may not deem his testimony true.

Jesus was simply acknowledging the Old Testament principle. The more witnesses, the more likely people will believe what is said. So we come here to the Apostle John.

1 John 5. And he's written this letter to us. And he's given us compelling evidence for the veracity, for the truthfulness of what he claims.

He actually gave us his own eyewitness testimony. When he opened the letter, I was there to witness that Jesus is God in the flesh. We've seen it several times.

I heard. I saw. I touched. The word of life. He was, after all, one of the twelve that Paul referenced in 1 Corinthians.

[10 : 20] That's some compelling evidence. Now John bolsters his own case. And he does this by following the teaching of both the Old Testament and the New. He brings his witnesses forward.

Not one witness. Not two witnesses. But three. The water. The blood. And the spirit. So what is each of these witnesses?

And what do they have to say? Well, each witness speaks of Christ. The first, the water. The water speaks of the baptism of Jesus.

Why would he emphasize that? Well, because this key event took place at the very beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. It signified his commissioning.

It was the start of his mission to preach the good news of the kingdom concerning himself. So that's the beginning of his ministry. And the blood. The blood speaks of the death of Christ.

[11 : 18] Of his crucifixion. That climactic moment near the end of his earthly ministry. His mission accomplished on the cross. It is finished, he said.

So the water and the blood. They mark the bookends of Jesus' earthly ministry. What began at his baptism and ended with his death on the cross.

He accomplished what he set out to do. And so all that we have in the gospel accounts, from the water to the blood, all of it testifies powerfully to the truth of who Jesus Christ is.

He is indeed God in the flesh who came to save his people from their sins. And he accomplished that mission that he came for. Now there's one more witness that we can't miss.

The Spirit. Why did John include the Spirit along with the water and the blood? Because testifying is written in bold in the Holy Spirit's job description.

[12 : 32] This is one of his primary roles. It is to testify about Jesus. The Holy Spirit's role is to point us to Christ.

It's his role in the Godhead. And he does it truthfully. What the Spirit says about Jesus is not misleading us. What the Spirit says about Jesus is not inaccurate.

He is the Spirit of truth. We've seen that in this letter many times. But here, John even says, the Spirit is the truth.

John says that. You can believe what he says. You can bank on it. And Jesus would agree with him. If you remember in the upper room, the night on which Jesus would be betrayed, he washed his disciples' feet and he taught them many things.

And in John 14, 15, he says this, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[13 : 48] You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. So, he is the Spirit of truth who testifies to the one who is the way, the truth, and the life.

He points us to Christ. He testifies to our hearts about the Son. Then Jesus went on to say, while still in that upper room, in John 15, 26, But 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.

So the water, the blood, and the Spirit who is the truth. Three witnesses and all three witnesses agree.

They don't contradict each other. They aren't telling different stories. They aren't frustrating John because they can't seem to get their stories figured out. Their testimony about Jesus is very different from the testimony about Jesus at his trial.

When Jesus was put on trial, the Jewish leaders, they needed a way to convict him. So they went looking for who? Witnesses.

[15 : 09] They needed some witness testimony. True or false didn't matter that much. They just needed people who would speak ill of Jesus. And so in Mark 14, we read this beginning in verse 55.

Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree.

And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another not made with hands.

Yet even about this, their testimony did not agree. So you see, the Jewish leaders, they didn't have just one witness. They had many witnesses.

Their problem wasn't the number of witnesses. Their problem was that those witnesses couldn't get their stories straight. They had met that threshold. According to the Old Testament law, you need more than one.

[16 : 15] You need two to three. You've got that. But those witnesses couldn't help but contradict each other. And so do you see what it, do you hear what it said there?

It said that they found no testimony. Well, that's weird. They had found witnesses who bore testimony, but because the testimony was false, false, and they couldn't line up, it was deemed as not to be true or not to be useful.

Here in John's letter, we have three witnesses also. But unlike the statements that were made in that kangaroo court in Mark 14, these statements in 1 John 5 line up perfectly.

They all point the finger in the best possible way at the same person. They are corroborating witnesses. What one says, the others support.

And what do they all say? What do they all testify to? They all testify to this single truth. Jesus is the Son of God. Not just a man.

[17 : 20] Not just a good teacher. Not a man who became a God. Not a Son of God. Jesus is the eternal Son who became man.

All three witnesses testify to this truth. So that's the first reason that we should believe what John has written. It's the first reason that we should believe the testimony concerning Jesus Christ.

Because it is the testimony of many witnesses. Here's the second reason. because it is the testimony of God. It's the testimony of God.

Just verse 9. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.

So John here argues from the lesser to the greater. We often accept the testimony of men. You can have witness testimony that holds up in court.

[18 : 29] Knowing full well that even so, sometimes this testimony is unreliable. As far as we can tell, the witness hasn't been bribed. As far as we can tell, the witness hasn't been coerced.

He or she isn't lying. He or she isn't fabricating this story. They seem to remember the events pretty accurately. So we accept it.

We accept the testimony of man. If we accept the testimony of man with all of its weaknesses, how much more then should we accept the testimony of God?

And John is making it abundantly clear. He is not giving the testimony of men in this letter. Now we may think on the surface that he is. After all, John is a man.

But he's not speaking on his own authority. He's not speaking just from himself. He's speaking much like John the Baptist did. And John the Baptist was a man.

[19 : 31] And yet, how is he introduced to us in the gospel account of John? John the Baptist. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light.

John the Baptist was sent from God. He came speaking the very words that God intended for him to deliver. He didn't come with his own agenda.

He was sticking to God's agenda. So too with John the Apostle in his letter. He's not speaking on his own. He's not speaking with his own authority.

He isn't just some guy with thoughts that thinks everyone should hear. That's how many people operate in our world today. Social media has provided us with something of a platform to speak.

We have a way to now make our voice heard. And for some reason, sometimes, we think that we have something to say when we don't. For those of us who aren't very handy, or perhaps you're handy but you're wanting to learn a new thing, where do we go?

[20 : 41] We hop on YouTube. And we get on YouTube with this silly, outrageous assumption that if someone has made a video about how to do something, they are highly skilled at whatever that is.

That they have mastered it. But sometime, after watching a video, perhaps for too long, we realize this. I don't think that person knows much more than I do. They are speaking like they have authority in this area of life, but they really don't.

They're just about as helpless as I am. Perhaps I need to make a video for their sake. That is something of the testimony of man. And that's not what John is doing here.

He's not just some guy with thoughts that he thinks everyone should hear. If that were the case, let's go ahead and close up our Bibles, and we might as well head home.

There's no point in gathering together. There are plenty of other voices that are out there that honestly sound more appealing, that have been packaged with a more sophistication, that are more exciting, that are more cutting edge.

[21 : 48] And we fell for this voice talking about water and blood. We've watched this YouTube video way too long before realizing John is just another guy who doesn't know what he's talking about.

But that's not true. That's not the case here. John is not speaking for himself. We've already seen it in chapter 4, verse 6. What did John say? We are from God.

In other words, I write to you with apostolic authority. Jesus spoke of this in that same upper room discourse when he said to his disciples in John 16 these words, I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

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.

So this letter, 1 John, is a result of that declaring that the Spirit was to do. This letter is the result of that guiding of the apostles into all the truth that the Spirit was going to do.

[23 : 05] So John is saying here, I am writing to you as one charged by God to deliver the truth to you. My words come to you with his authority.

This is not the testimony of men. This is the testimony of God himself. We sang tonight that there is a higher throne.

We have a higher authority. And the God who sits upon that throne with authority over all men, his testimony is greater than man's.

So we do well to listen to him. And his communication to us is crystal clear. He speaks to us concerning his Son.

He bears witness to us concerning the truth of who his Son is. The testimony of man is weak.

[24 : 06] It's flimsy. maybe it's true. Sometimes it is. But maybe it's not. We can't be all that sure. The testimony of God we can be sure of.

The testimony of God is strong. It is entirely reliable. Proverbs 35 says, every word of God proves true.

Every word of God. Not most of them. Not all of his words except perhaps an article here or there. every word of God. His testimony is perfectly reliable.

He's never wrong. God is not a man that he should lie. Says Numbers 23 19. He never misleads with his words. Instead his words give light.

His testimony is sure. And how glad we should be of that. That we can trust what God says. because what God testifies to, what God says about Jesus Christ is of no small matter.

[25 : 12] It is of eternal significance. And that's the third reason that we should believe what John writes. Because it is the testimony concerning eternal life.

Beginning in verse 10. whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning him.

And this is the testimony that God gave us. Eternal life. And this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

neighbors don't always get along. Disputes can arise. And sometimes those disputes can rise to the level of needing to go to court.

It might be something because of noise problems or claims of damage to another property. And sometimes to resolve those cases witness testimony is needed.

- [26 : 18] The case may actually hinge on what one person says. So that's some important testimony. There could be some money at stake here. Thousands of dollars perhaps.
- But that kind of testimony pales in comparison to the testimony that we have from God. Because no outcome of any earthly court case is as significant and as urgent as this one.
- In a dispute between neighbors perhaps money is on the line. But eternal life hinges on the testimony of God. If Jesus is who he says he is then your eternal state is on the line.
- So the question is do you believe the testimony of the father concerning his son? This public testimony has it come to reside in your heart?
- Has the gospel message that you have heard proclaimed have you believed it in your heart? There is an internal working here that must take place.
- [27 : 27] You must have dealings in your heart with God and what he has said. And if you believe this testimony about the son, John says that you have the son.
- He is yours. And if you have the son, then you have life. Eternal life. So if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, listen to the testimony of God.
- He testifies concerning his son, the only savior. He speaks to you of him. He says, here is eternal life and this life is in my son.
- In John 5, Jesus Christ, the son himself, was speaking to those who had opposed him. And he said this, the father who sent me has himself borne witness about me.
- His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.
- [28 : 37] You have heard the father's testimony. The father has testified. Do you have the son tonight? Do you believe the one the father has borne witness about?
- Do you believe the one that the father has sent? Have you turned from your life of sin, from a life that opposes God, that is at odds with God, and have you trusted in Christ, believing in him as the only one who can save you from your sins?
- do you have the son tonight? You can. Believe in him, and you will have life. Because if you don't have the son, that means that you refuse to believe the testimony of God about him.
- The testimony that you have right here in God's word. You are turning it away. You've heard it. You have no excuse. You can't say, I didn't know, when you stand before God one day.
- You can't say, I must have been absent from class that day when we covered that matter. You can't shrug it off. You have heard his testimony about his son.
- [29 : 51] Maybe you've heard it time and time again. If you don't believe, you are calling into question God as a witness.
- But you aren't just saying that perhaps God is mistaken. Or maybe God's memory failed him. Or maybe he got confused. Or maybe he was intimidated on the stand.
- You're not saying any of those things. John says you are accusing God of being a liar. You are maligning his character. You are saying this witness doesn't tell the truth.
- This witness can't be trusted. His credibility, it's shot through. And if you continue to refuse to listen to his testimony, there are dire consequences.
- You don't have the son. And if you don't have the son, you don't have life. And to not have life means that eternal death awaits you. Only condemnation in hell.
- [30 : 56] So repent of your unbelief tonight. Listen to the testimony of the father and believe in the son that he speaks of. We've been given three concrete reasons tonight that we must believe the testimony concerning the son.

Because it is the testimony of many witnesses. Because it is the testimony of God himself. And because it is the testimony concerning eternal life. So for us who are in Christ, the call is to keep listening to the testimony.

The call is to keep believing the testimony. Because he who speaks to us, he only tells the truth. And we need to listen.

And we need to live by that truth. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, what a word that you have given to us.

What a sure testimony that you have borne concerning your son. Help us as your people to continue to believe what you have said.

[32 : 07] To hold fast to the testimony of Christ. And to be willing and confident and bold and courageous to speak this testimony.

To bear witness ourselves in a world that opposes you. Help us to be faithful to that end. Give us that courage. Give us that strength.

And we do pray, Father, that you would be at work by your spirit to save the lost in our church. That you would bring to faith those who have heard the testimony time and time again, who have been in our midst, who have sat under the preaching of the word and yet have said, I don't believe this witness.

We pray that you would open their eyes to see. We pray that you would give them the gift of repentance and faith that they might hear yet again and believe what you have said and that they might have life.

Father, we know that you can do this. We know that only you can do this work and we testify to the work that you have done in our own hearts as proof that you could save. We pray that you would save the lost, that you would sanctify your church, that you would make us to be a people who continue to believe the testimony concerning your Son.

[33 : 20] for in him we have life and it's in his name that we pray. Amen.