

The Witness of the Holy Spirit

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 July 2017

Preacher: Jason Webb

- [0:00] What they heard, what they understand, all sorts of things. And sometimes you find a witness's testimony credible, helpful, insightful.
- ! Sometimes you find one of the witnesses not so credible, not so insightful. You don't put a lot of weight or they don't help, they don't seem relevant. And so there you are in this trial and as the juror, as the jury, you're still in the middle, you're still undecided.
- Witnesses are going both ways and you're just not sure what to do. But then we'll say the defense. They call a witness. And this witness is not like the other witnesses.
- This witness, when he speaks, you immediately can tell he knows what he's talking about. He's completely credible. He understands the situation.
- And when he testifies, he speaks with so much honesty and so much conviction, so much clarity, with so much insight, that the whole case turns on his testimony.
- [1:19] The whole case snaps into focus. It's clear now. And it's absolutely convincing. And so from that point on, the case is decided. And no one can say anything from that point on that will change your opinion.
- Because that witness was so powerful that now you're judging other witnesses by what he said. And all the other voices find their place and all other facts fall into place.
- And so the case is established. It's settled. That is the witness of the Holy Spirit. That is the witness of the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible talks repeatedly about this Holy Spirit testifying. Or the witness of the Holy Spirit. And so, so far in this class, we've seen that the Holy Spirit, he is God.
- He gives new birth. He indwells us. He sanctifies us. And today we want to talk about his work of testifying in our hearts. Of witnessing to us.
- [2:26] And what I want to say is, that can seem like a sort of abstract, maybe a little bit unhelpful or something, ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Maybe you don't know what to make of that. Like, why would that matter? And what I want to say here at the very beginning is, is that no small amount of your comfort as a Christian, your hope as a Christian, your perseverance as a Christian, your holiness as a Christian, depends on this work.
- Our fruitfulness, our perseverance, all depends upon this work. And so it's not a little thing. It's not a trivial thing. The Bible speaks repeatedly about it.
- And so, first what we want to do is just go through the Scriptures and look and see this ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we're going to sort of go in scriptural order. And so turn to John chapter 15.
- John chapter 15, verse 26. Now, I'm going to tell you, we're not going to hit every single one, but we are going to hit three or four of the highlights.
- [3:44] John chapter 15, verse 26. And here is Jesus speaking. When the counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

He will testify about me. He will bear witness. Those are court words. Those are formal words. It's not merely hearsay. It's not the Spirit mentioning sort of in an offhand way.

No, this is a very formal, serious. The Spirit will witness to me. The court is in session. Lives hang in the balance. And the Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ.

And lives go one way or the other based upon his testimony and what they do with it. Then turn over to Romans chapter 8, verse 16.

Romans 8, 16. Verse 15 says, But you've received the Spirit of sonship, and by him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

[5:04] Then Hebrews chapter 10. Keep going. Hebrews chapter 10. So we've seen so far that the Spirit does this work of testifying to Jesus and to our adoption.

And then Hebrews chapter 10, verse 15. And we're going to read verses 15 through 18 and just follow along and look to what the Spirit testifies to us about in this passage.

Hebrews 10, 15. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says, This is the covenant I will make with them.

After that time, says the Lord, I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds. Then he adds, Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.

Verse 17. Who is the he? Well, it's the Spirit. The Spirit has one thing to say and then he adds this, that their sins and their lawless acts I will remember no more.

[6:10] And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. And so let me ask you, what is the Spirit testifying to in this passage?

What is he saying to us? There's a couple bullet points. He's testifying to the new covenant.

The establishing of a new covenant. It's not like the old covenant where there was a repetition of the sacrifices again and again. And with the old covenant's repeated sense of guilt and with the old covenant's sense of failure and coming up short, the Spirit testifies with us through the Scripture that there is now a new covenant.

Not like the old covenant. And in this new covenant, Christ is sacrificed once for all. So the Spirit testifies with us that it is finished.

It's finished. What else does he testify to us? On the basis of it is finished, what does he say? To us.

[7:20] Our sins have been dealt with. They're forgiven. 1 John chapter 5. So keep going. 1 John chapter 5.

And again, we're going to read several verses here. Verses 5 through 12. 1 John 5, 5. Well, who is it that overcomes the world?

Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the one who comes by water and blood, Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.

And it is the Spirit who testifies, 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.

[8:19] 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.

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, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Well, there's so much there, but you see that the Holy Spirit is in the middle of all of that, of testifying, of giving testimony. He's testifying to Jesus.

He's testifying to us about the eternal life that we have. And so that's the Holy Spirit's witnessing work, and that's what I want to talk about today. And again, remember, hopefully I'm going to impress upon you that this is so practical.

It's so helpful to us. And so we want to talk about the witness of the Holy Spirit just with three questions. And the first question, very briefly, is what do I mean by testify?

[9:29] What's sort of the nature of that work? Well, I guess there's probably a lot of ways you can answer that question, but I want you to go back to that illustration that we began with.

The witness of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit convincing us of things, of certain truths. It's the Spirit establishing in our own hearts and in our minds the truth of something.

It's His taking away, removing of doubt and confusion. And so remember that illustration that after that particular witness took the stand, and to a great degree, the matter was settled.

The case was settled. Everything became clear. When He spoke, He spoke with such clarity and honesty and power and openness, such expertise, that all the facts fell into place.

All the confusion was removed. And that's the kind of witness that the Bible talks about when it's talking about the Spirit giving witness. The Spirit isn't standing in line with a bunch of other witnesses, and it's just like us trying to still figure out the truth.

[10:50] It's not the Spirit standing in line with a bunch of other witnesses and then leaving it up to us to decide, well, who's telling the truth or who's not. No, when He speaks, and when He speaks powerfully, the truth is established.

It's established in our own hearts. We know. We know. We know. We capital K, capital N, capital O, capital W.

We know the truth. We're convinced. And in the light of His testimony, we see and understand everyone else's words. We judge everyone else by what He says.

And that's the kind of witnessing I'm talking about. It's the Spirit convincing us. It's the Spirit assuring us powerfully of the truth.

Now, secondly, why is the Holy Spirit a good witness? What makes Him a good witness? We want to look at a few things.

[12:01] Because, really, the quality of a witness determines how much credibility you give Him. So, why is the Holy Spirit a good witness?

First, I wouldn't have thought of this, but Octavius Winslow did. And he says, what do you want in a good witness? Well, you want someone of sound mind.

What he means is, you don't want a raving lunatic. You don't want someone who's out of their mind. You want someone who is sober-minded, who has understanding, who is wise.

You want someone who knows what they're talking about. And so, when they call in a jury situation, when they call for a forensic witness, or a forensic expert, excuse me, to talk about the facts of the, you know, I don't know, the blood, or the fingerprints, or the gunshot, the ballistics of all of that, when they call for an expert forensic witness, they don't call me.

Because the closest I've come is, I maybe have watched ten episodes of Law and Order. Maybe. That does not make me someone who knows what I'm talking about.

[13:21] But the Holy Spirit knows what He's talking about. Isaiah chapter 11 says that the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Jesus Christ.

And in that passage, the Spirit is called the Spirit of wisdom and understanding of counsel and of might of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And so, is the Holy Spirit a competent witness?

He's the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. We could unpack that, but it just means He's the wisdom of God.

So is He a competent witness? Is He worth listening to? Yes. Well, why else is He a good witness? Because He knows personally, firsthand, everything that He speaks of.

the Holy Spirit is not a gossip. The Holy Spirit is not the fourth or fifth person in the game of telephone where who knows if He's got it right or not.

[14:30] He doesn't repeat things He's heard or repeat things that He's heard from other people or what other people have seen or second or third hand. He doesn't base His witness on those things.

He knows. He knows. He knows because He's God. And so when God speaks, the testimony of God is greater than the testimony of man because God knows everything.

So listen to Winslow again. He reveals to His people what no creature I saw nor ear heard nor heart conceived unless first enlightened and renewed by Him.

No eye has seen no ear heard neither has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them that love but God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God. So the Spirit knows personally everything He testifies to He knows Jesus Christ.

[15:43] He knows Him because He's always known Him. He knows Him because He's always lived with Him. He knows Him because He is the Spirit of Christ. He knows our status as children of God.

He knows that judgment is coming. He knows the righteousness required. He knows everything God is going to do because He is God. And He explores even the deep things of God and knows them.

He knows because we are His own work. so I doubt anyone understands and knows the Sistine Chapel the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel like Michelangelo because Michelangelo created it.

He thought of it. He knew what he was thinking the whole time. He understood how he did it. He understands what it meant because it was His own work and in the same way the Holy Spirit has come into us.

And He's made us children of God. He's been the one who's brought us to the cross. He's the one that joins us to Jesus. He knows it all firsthand because we are His work.

[17:01] And so when He tells us something about us, we can trust Him because He is the one who has saved us. He's the one who's made us new. He knows it like you know the color of your skin or the shape of your face because He's seen it.

He knows it. He's studied it. It's always before Him. And so He speaks. Well, why should we listen to Him? Because He always tells the truth.

In John 15 and 1 John 5, in both places, John calls the Spirit the Spirit of Truth. If a witness is a liar, it doesn't matter how much He knows.

It doesn't matter what He knows and what He doesn't know. It doesn't matter what He understands or He doesn't understand. It doesn't matter what He's seen or what He's heard. If He is a liar, He's not a good witness.

But the Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth. And so when you listen, when you listen to what the Spirit says, you are listening to the absolute truth.

[18:10] You're listening to the one who cannot lie, who will not lie, He tells you the truth. And He tells you the truth even when it's going to be hard for you to believe.

Now, your sins, your conscience, the devil will be saying to you, will be testifying to you, will be witnessing to you, you have more to do.

Your sins aren't completely dealt with. You're still in your sin. God doesn't care about you. You are nothing to God. And let me tell you, haven't you found this to be true? When you are listening to those voices, it seems true.

And it feels true. But the Spirit who cannot lie says, it is finished. You are a child of God.

And so, let me ask you, who should you listen to? your feelings, your feelings that can change with a good night's sleep, or can change with a bad night's sleep.

[19:24] Should you listen to the devil? Because when he speaks, he lies. Because lying is his native tongue. So maybe some of you have a second language.

language. And unless you're really good at it, you have to work at that second language. It's almost like the devil has to work to just tell the truth. So enraptured with his own lies.

And so, should you believe it? And I guess what I'm saying is we need to tune these ears and these hearts to listen to the Holy Spirit as he speaks to us through the Scripture, as he testifies in our own hearts.

He's not tricking you. He's not confusing you. He's not giving you false hope. If you're a Christian, it really is as good as he says it is.

Now, really, here's the third question where we're going to spend the rest of our time here. The all-important question. What does the Spirit testify to us?

[20:33] What does the Spirit, what does he say in his testimony? What facts does he testify to? So, we've seen that this testimony is assuring us, is convincing us, is speaking the truth to us so that we believe it.

And we see why we should listen to him. Now, in the third place, what facts does he testify to? Well, he testifies to the truth of the word of God.

The word of God. He says this word is the word of God. It's not the word of man. No matter what anyone says, it's the word of God.

The Spirit testifies to us and convinces us the gospel as we hear it. It rings true to us when he comes to us in power.

The Spirit puts his finger upon us. And he says, you're the man. You're the man that this word is talking about.

[21:49] Now, if your salvation experience is anything like mine, and maybe in a lot of you, it probably was. There's probably some of you who it's not exactly like this, but you had heard the word a lot.

You'd sat under the preaching and you heard it, but you didn't hear it. You heard it, but it wasn't yours. It didn't matter. It wasn't about you.

But then something happened. Something unexplainable happened. As the word was preached, all of a sudden, that word that last week had no relevance, it wasn't about you, it didn't matter to you, it didn't count to you, all of a sudden, you realize it's talking about me.

It's talking about me. It's talking about I'm a sinner, and now I'm starting to see my sin. And it's just like the word of God said, it's just like the gospel says.

And then all of a sudden, Jesus Christ who I knew about, I could answer all the Sunday school questions about, but I didn't know, I didn't love, I didn't really care about, all of a sudden, he's the one that became the most important thing.

[23 : 09] How did that happen? It's one of those things that convinces me of the truth of the gospel because I know in my own experience, it happened powerfully.

I wasn't looking. Well, it was the spirit testifying to my own heart that it was true. So the spirit testifies to the truthfulness of the word of God as we read it.

We don't need apologists. We don't need some sort of academic theologians who can defend the faith. They're good, they have their place, I'm not discounting, God can use them.

I'm not saying that, but the spirit of God testifies to the truth of the gospel. The spirit of God testifies to the word of God as we read it. But Winslow even has something deeper and more powerful in mind.

He's not only talking about the cognitive, the head knowledge of that, he's talking about the deep experiential knowledge of that. Listen to what he says. We allude to that firm, unmoved, and immovable belief of the truth.

[24 : 23] Now listen to what exactly he's talking about. So we're talking about this firm, unmoved, and immovable belief of the truth, which is often an after work.

An after work. What he means by that is, it's not something that, at least at this point, he's talking about. So the spirit testifies at the beginning of our conversion and he's doing it all the way, but then he says, you know what, there's more testifying that the spirit does.

And it comes not right when you are saved generally, but it happens afterward. It's a work of time and of deep experience before the heart becomes thoroughly schooled into it.

So what Winslow is talking about here is the spirit testifying to us over months and years of life, of trial, of experience, that we come to a place of deeper assurance.

We come to a place where we trust without doubting. He says that we renounce all other dependents. We've tasted again and again the faithfulness of God's promises.

[25 : 43] That is a testimony of we have felt the comfort of the gospel. Not just once or twice, but I felt it again and again and again and now I know it.

And we've seen how the word of God helps me in my sorrow. And I've seen how the word of God helps me when it's all dark and confusing. This word is a light to my path.

So where do I go when I need to know what to do? Well, I know where to go because I've been there. Well, that's what the spirit does. He testifies through our experience, through our trials, through time that the Bible is true, that every word is true, and that I don't live on bread alone.

I live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Do you see what he's saying? Do you see what I'm saying? Excuse me. Do you see what I'm saying when I say so much of our comfort and so much of our joy and so much of our obedience and so much of our perseverance depends on the spirit testifying to our hearts?

When we live in doubt, we can be like those men in James 1, those double minded men, unstable in all of our ways.

[27 : 18] And we're unhappy. We're uncertain. We spend a lot of time in fear. And when each new trial comes, it sends us almost over to the edge.

And it becomes hard for us to obey. And it's hard to go forward. But when faith meets the trial, when that assurance of God is for me and I am God's child and I am forgiven, when those things are powering me and I meet the trial, and God's promises, I've experienced God's faithfulness.

And so I know that this time is not going to be any different. I have 99 things in my past that tells me God does what He says He's going to do. And so here He is again.

He's going to be faithful the hundredth time. So we have faith in God's promises and faith in God's character. He's a good God. And I'm going to trust Him even if He slays me.

And there's hope there. There's peace. There's joy. And that's the work of all those trials. That's the work of all those difficulties in your life.

- [28 : 39] It provides opportunities for the Word of God to come true in your life. It provides opportunities. It provides openings for the Spirit of God to speak into our hearts.

This is true. Believe it. And so with each new trial the Spirit's testimony and testifying comes to us and we become more and more assured of what He says.

And the result is joy. The result is comfort even in the midst of deep trials. So we're sad and yet we have hope. We're thrown down but you know we're not destroyed.

So He testifies to the truth of God's Word. The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus Christ. The Scriptures speak of Him. Remember what Jesus said?

You know all about the Scriptures. You say you believe them but they're the ones that testify about me. Well the Scriptures testify about Jesus. And all Scripture is God breathed.

- [29 : 47] It's the Word of God. It's the Spirit inspired Word. And so the Spirit speaks through the Scriptures but the Spirit also speaks into our own hearts directly with using the Scriptures.

He says to our hearts here's Jesus. Here He is. He uncovers Him. He says trust Him. He's all you need.

Here He is. He's God. He's God. The Spirit says of Jesus He's God. Scholars, men, say He's not God.

He can't be God. The Holy Spirit says He's God. And our whole salvation hangs on His divinity. Winslow says this, this idea that Jesus is God, this is your plank, this is your life boat, this is your ark, this is your all.

Your Savior is God. Jesus was called Jesus because it means the Lord saves. And here Jesus is. He's coming as the Lord.

- [31 : 03] He's saving. The Spirit says that into our own hearts. The Spirit testifies to us about Christ that He's the God-man. And again, that's a mystery.

It's a mystery. How can God and man be one person? And yet, His divinity and His humanity. And so it's the fullness of God dwelling as a human.

Not just in a human, but as a human. It wasn't just the Spirit of God motivating a human body.

He was a human body and soul. soul. And so the Word was made flesh and in His humanity He obeyed. And in His humanity He bled and died.

But it was God. God as man obeyed. God as man who died. And so the Spirit says, here Jesus is.

- [32 : 03] Let me tell you about Him. He is God. He can save you. He is man. He can sympathize with you. He is obedient. He's Lord. And He comes with that convincing testimony.

And so the Holy Spirit comes and the eyes of our soul see Christ. And we hear Christ. And we know Christ through the work of the Spirit.

And He brings us to Him. He testifies to Him. And so, by the Spirit we trust in Jesus. Not just one time at the beginning. Oh, but for fresh grace today.

I need Jesus today. the Spirit testifies to the finished work of the cross. And we already saw this in Hebrews.

But the Old Testament priests and the Old Testament sacrifices could never take away sin. The priests under the law were left to sacrifices that could not finally take away sin.

[33 : 11] And that's why they were repeated day after day, month after month, year after year. There were tables and basins and altars and lots of furniture in the temple, but one pastor says you can read through Leviticus and Numbers and you'll never read of a chair in the temple.

because the priest never could sit down and say the work is done. But when Christ offered up his sacrifice, what did he do? Hebrews says he sat down.

Work finished. And so the Spirit powerfully testifies in our own hearts. It is finished. Your sins are covered. Past, present, future, all forgiven.

God is propitiated. That means there's no more wrath in the heart of God for you. There's no more wrath. There's no more enemy anger. There might be fatherly displeasure, but it's the displeasure of a father's loving heart.

But there is no wrath in the heart of God for you. The blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all sin. The Spirit testifies with our spirits about that. And again, it's more than just words on a page, although it is true that the Spirit inspires the Bible, but it's a work in our hearts, in our minds, and then it comes with joyous conviction.

[34 : 43] My sins are done. My sins are forgiven. And so I'm going to ask you, have you experienced that? Has the Spirit done that work? Where you've now entered into a greater freedom, a great freedom into this forgiveness of sins.

And so pile my sins as high as you want. Pile them up as high as you want on the door, pile them higher than the heavens, and the answer is, but Jesus died. Jesus died.

He died for me. He loved me, and he gave himself up for me. And so what have I to dread? What have I to fear? My sins as high as the heavens are all paid for.

And so listen to me carefully. In one sense, that means they're nothing to me. my old school debts, think about this, you've had old debts, and you've paid them off.

Do they haunt you? Do they haunt you? Do you go to bed thinking, oh, my old debts? Well, my old Sallie Mae debts are nothing to me.

[35 : 52] They're paid for. They're done with. And it's not that we take any of our sins lightly. That's not the point. But we should be living in the joy of paid off sins.

Not being haunted by old debts that Jesus had paid off. And that's what happens is the Spirit testifies to us that we've been forgiven. That's the freedom and the joy that the Spirit gives.

And that's why the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace. Those things come from knowing your sins are forgiven. So that's the Spirit testifying in our own hearts.

And last finally, Romans 8, the Spirit testifies that I'm God's child. This is the glory of glories. I am God's child. I'm adopted. And now I'm in the family.

God is my Father. He loves me. One of my favorite songs goes like this. I know I've quoted it before, but it captures our adoption.

[36 : 59] We were ruined in our sin. We were guilty and undone when your love reached down with sovereign hands and beckoned us to come. You sought out the wanderers, made the prodigals come home, and with a lavish feast you welcomed us, for you made us your own.

You have loved us like you love your son. We are heirs with Christ, bought by his blood. Oh, how great the love that we've been shown. We're your children now.

You made us your own. Now, I want you to just one last thing. Do you see the Spirit's love for you? There is good news.

You aren't on your own. You weren't an orphan. There is good news, and the Spirit wants to tell you that good news. You love giving good news to people that you love, don't you?

And the Spirit is the same way. And so the Spirit speaks into our own hearts, sings into our own hearts, you're children of God. And think about that. There's a world of joy and a world of comfort and a world of peace in knowing that God is my Father.

[38:13] There's comfort and joy now. There's hope for tomorrow because I'm an heir of God and a co-heir with Christ. Everything that God has is coming to me, and so my provider is God, the one who loves me is God, and I belong to Him.

The Spirit does not testify that God is still angry with me, still wrathful with me. He doesn't testify that I'm an enemy or a stranger or a slave.

Wenzel says, he says, you're a child of God. And so rejoice in that. Cherish that. Love the Spirit who speaks so persistently and passionately and so steadfastly into our hearts.

He wants you to know your privilege. He wants you to know the goodness of God. He wants you to know your salvation, and He wants you to even enjoy it now.

He wants you to know it and enjoy it. Because He loves you. Holy Spirit loves you, so He testifies in your own hearts. Well, let's pray and then we'll be dismissed.

[39:27] Oh, our God, we do thank You for this work of the Holy Spirit. Thank You that You testify that we are children of God. Thank You that You tell us that our sins are forgiven, and I pray that these great truths would encourage us and help us in this world that could be so hard and so full of confusion and sorrow.

So I pray that You would please speak through Your Word more powerfully. Give us faith to believe what You are telling us, that we might go in the joy of it.

Pray that You would bless the rest of our day together. In Jesus' name, Amen.