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Witnessing of Jesus Christ

John 1:29-34

Intro: Previously, we established that the author (John) followed a specific outline to close out ch1. The elements of the outline were given in vs7-8 and consist of 3 basic points, centered on the testimony of John the Baptist. John understood that: (1) he was not the Light, (2) he was sent to bear witness of that Light so that (3) all men through him might believe. Last week we looked at the 1st point (19-28) where John categorically denies that he is the Light, or any other popular end-times figure. Today, we'll address the 2nd point (vs29-34) that John bears witness of the Light.

How does a Christian witness of Jesus? This question is of the utmost importance, not just because each believer is called to bear witness of Jesus but also because the spread of the Gospel today depends in large part on whether or not we'll do it and, if we do, how well we do it. I must say up front: this message is not meant to embarrass, coerce or guilt-trip anyone into "setting the world on fire" for Christ. I was exposed to that type of teaching most of my childhood and I'm here to tell you it doesn't work. You can have all the Sunday School promotions and "fill a pew" drives you want but that's not evangelism. You may drum up some interest in the community but if it's not based on true, heart-felt conversions, it won't last. No, the purpose of these messages on witnessing and the notes on evangelism on the calendars is simply to clarify and inform. I believe every Christian has the desire to witness but may fail to do so because they haven't been properly equipped. The information provided is not the end-all, be-all of soul-winning, but it's certainly a start. Hopefully, we will all pursue it prayerfully. If we do, our community will be the better for it.

How does a Christian witness? We've already seen the 1st great principle for being a witness: the effective witness understands he has no independent importance in himself. John the Baptist was adamant that he was not the Light. This means that a Christian will never be an effective witness if he's thinking of himself or his own needs first. Don't get me wrong, our own needs do have a certain degree of importance. But, we'll never be able to properly focus on the needs of others if our own needs dominate our thinking. Now for a believer, our own needs are already met in a sense,

whether we recognize it or not. **Phil 4:19** says, “**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**”. Our needs are already **met in Christ!** If we, as God’s children, can’t clearly see that yet then we really don’t have much to testify of. While all this is important, it’s not witnessing, it’s just the 1st principle of it.

The 2nd great principle for witnessing is that we must bear witness of the Light, that is: **we must witness verbally**. If we are going to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, our witness must move **out** of the area of **life** and **into** the area of **words**. Not to diminish the testimony of a holy, Christian life. There **must be** visible evidence of **upright character** and a **true commitment to Christ** in our lives to **back up** our verbal testimony. But, as important as it is, Christian living by itself is **not enough** for a **complete** witness. There must also be a verbal witness.

Let me explain: Paul tells us in **Rom 1:20** that all men are **without excuse** concerning the knowledge of God because creation itself **declares** both the existence and the power of God. But, as we have already discussed, creation is **inadequate** in its revelation of God because it does **not** reveal the plan of God for the salvation of sinners (**it wasn’t meant to**). That required another special revelation (**JC**). In the same way, the Christian lifestyle clearly declares the existence and the power of God in a Christian’s life but it **doesn’t** communicate to the lost what’s necessary to **obtain** the presence of God in their own lives. That also requires a special revelation: a verbal witness about Jesus Christ.

Please note: I’m not saying a **non-verbal witness** of Christian living is not necessary; I’m saying it’s **inadequate**. By itself, a non-verbal witness is at best **confusing** to the unsaved & at worst – totally misconstrued: “**They just think they’re better than us**.” The lost will never understand why you live the way you do unless you tell them. Thus, a non-verbal witness of Christian living, **if it is effective at all**, should **lead to** a verbal witness. If you’re trying to honor Christ by the way you live, then your way of life should **lead to** conversation about Jesus Christ & what He’s done for you. Paul establishes this with a series of rhetorical questions in **Rom 10:13-15** – we are the ones who have been sent.

Thus, a verbal witness is a true witness. There’s no fear of leading someone astray if you only tell them about your own personal experience with Jesus.

Throughout John's Gospel, the stories of those who were reached by Jesus almost without exception conclude with a verbal confession of their belief in Him. It's the same thing right here at the beginning of the Gospel, John the Baptist testifies of the one who has come to take away the sin of the world.

Now, if we're going to bear witness of Jesus; clearly, we must know something about Him. That means we must have a message. So, what's our message? The 3 parts to the answer to that question are alluded to in our text. We must be a witness to: 1) **who Jesus Christ is**; 2) **what He has done**; and 3) **how a person can know Him personally**.

1) Jesus Christ is God! John the Baptist alludes to this truth in vs30 and declares it plainly in vs34. The author spent most of the 1st 18 verses establishing this truth. In fact, in several places in this book, Jesus Himself declares this when He says, "***I and My Father are one***" (10:30) and "***He who has seen Me has seen the Father***" (14:9). Even His enemies recognized He was making Himself equal with God and they wanted to kill him because of it.

This is where our witness of Jesus must start because nearly every important point of Christian doctrine gains its significance from the fact that ***Jesus Christ is God!*** If Jesus were just a man then His death on the cross may serve as an inspiring example of good works but it would have been completely useless in achieving atonement for sins. Worse than that, if Jesus ***isn't*** God, then nothing He ever did would really matter and we would all be hopelessly lost in our sins. In light of His own claims, if Jesus ***isn't*** God than He's nothing more than a liar and a lunatic.

2) Jesus died for sin! This is the focus of our text. Of course, Jesus has done quite a lot: He was active in creation; in Israel's history; in bring us the Scriptures; etc... But, the focus of Christ's work in our text is found in His death on the cross. Thus, in our witness for Christ, we want to share the meaning of His death because it's exactly this limited aspect of the work of Jesus Christ that matters most to a lost a dying world.

29- next day – the day after John met with the delegates from Jerusalem. Several weeks had already passed since Jesus was baptized by John. Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, but now He's returned and John turns the attention of the crowd to Him by declaring Him to be ***the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***

Lamb – This title is so familiar in Christian terminology that we fail to realize how strange it must have been for John’s audience. The people of Israel were familiar with the concept of lambs used for sacrifice: from the sacrifice of Abel to the lambs slain for the 1st Passover in Egypt, the Jews were well acquainted with the imagery of a lamb. At Passover, every family had to kill a lamb. Every day of the year, 2 lambs were sacrificed in the temple; beside all the other lambs brought for sacrifices. The Jews knew that in every instance, a **sacrifice** meant the death of an innocent substitute in place of the one who had sinned. But here’s the thing: all those lambs were brought by men to men, but John’s announcing something that’s never happened before. Here’s God’s Lamb, being given by God to men! Those lambs couldn’t take away sin but the Lamb of God can take away sin. Those lambs were for Israel only but this Lamb would shed His blood for the whole world: every nation, culture, religion and race without distinction.

In a sense, this title John uses sums up the message of the entire Bible. In the OT, the question is, “**Where is the lamb?**” (**Gen 22:7-8**). The NT answers this question. The emphasis of the 4 Gospels is, “**Behold the Lamb of God!**” Here He is! God has provided the Lamb to take away sin and purchase salvation for all who will believe. It doesn’t end there! If you’ve trusted in Christ, one day you’ll sing with the heavenly choir, “**Worthy is the Lamb!**” (**Rev 5:11-12**)

Clearly, John the Baptist recognized that all the Levitical sacrifices would be fulfilled in Jesus and that He would bear (**take away**) the sin of the world just as Isaiah had prophesied centuries before (**Isa 53:4-5**). This title also alludes to the fact that Jesus is able to deliver from death those who believe on Him. Not just the final death, the 2nd death: the eternal separation of a person’s soul from God. Jesus delivers from that. But, He also delivers from the little deaths the lost experience everyday because they’re alienated from God. Jesus delivers from that death too. Our privilege as Christians is that we get to tell others about **the means** by which **sin is removed**: **by faith in the person & work of Jesus Christ** & the fact that the one who believes on Him is given **new life, joy, peace and free access to God!**

3) Jesus gives the Holy Spirit! This is the point John is making in **vs31-34**. When John began announcing the soon arrival of the Messiah, he didn’t know who the Messiah was. He just knew that his own ministry of baptism

would somehow serve as the curtain raiser for the public appearance of the Coming One. Now, something happened when Jesus came up out of the Jordan, after John had baptized Him. All 4 Gospels record that the Spirit descended and remained on Jesus. This was the sign John divinely received in advance. Now, ignorance was replaced by certainty.

John again makes the distinction between his ministry & the Messiah's: John baptized with water but Messiah will baptize with the Holy Spirit. We'll discuss the full implications of that statement at a later date but in its simplest form it means that **Jesus Christ was the One who would give of His Spirit to those who choose to follow Him**. Put another way: **Jesus, thru the Spirit, would come to live within the lives of His followers**.

Lest anyone feel slighted, I recognize that I have given you the means by which a person comes to know Jesus personally (Holy Spirit) but not the mechanics. How does that happen? **It happens by faith as we receive Him or open the door of our lives to His knocking**. This principle is seen in **vs12**. It's also seen in **Rev 3:20**. These verses indicate a two step process. 1st step: we **hear** His voice or **believe** in Him. 2nd step: we **receive Him** or **respond** to His call (**open our hearts**). We do this **by praying**. We say, **"Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am a sinner and in need of the salvation that you bring to men. I believe that you died for me, so that my sin is atoned for and borne away forever. I now open the door and invite you into my life and ask that you will cleanse me and rule my life forever. Amen."** It is as simple as that, but it must be a definite commitment. There are no short cuts to eternal life.

Have you done this? Have you prayed some version of that prayer? If you haven't then you're not really a Christian. It's not enough to just know **about** Jesus; you must **belong** to Him, you must be one of His. That only happens when you accept Jesus as both Savior and the Lord of your life. There are no half measures – He must be both.

Of course, if you **have** done this, if you've prayed this prayer in all sincerity; have you ever invited another person to make the same commitment? You don't have to be a theologian; you just have to know Jesus personally yourself. Living a Christian lifestyle is a must but it's not enough. We must also be prepared to share the truth about Jesus and what He can do for them. Speaking from my own experience - there are few joys in this life equal to when the invitation is given to believe in Jesus and the person I'm

witnessing to responds in faith and comes to Him. Do they all respond positively? No. Have you ever been fishing where you caught them all? I like to fish but some days I put in a lot of time and effort just to find out the only thing biting is the gnats. Why go fishing? Because on any given day, you'll hit the mother lode & that makes up for all the times you didn't. Not everyone you witness to will accept Christ but those that do will make up for all the previous efforts that seemed to be for naught. 😊