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The Perfect Witness

John 3:31-36

Intro: Theologians disagree on the point of who exactly is speaking in our text today. On the surface, it would appear that John the Baptist is merely continuing his discourse on the ministry of Christ that he began in vs27. Some claim that these words were spoken by Jesus but, many scholars hold that the remainder of ch3 is simply the narrator's comments inserted by John the Evangelist. They refer to stylistic writing points that indicate the Apostle's hand. But, whether these are the words of the Baptist or the Evangelist, the truths expressed in our text serve to advance the claims of Jesus Christ by presenting the unique relationship that Jesus enjoys with the Father as well as the importance of being in a right relationship with Him.

If you were to go out on the street and poll 10 different people with the question: "Does God exist?" 9 out of 10 would probably say "Yes." Of that 9, if you were to ask them, "How do you know?" you'd most likely get 9 different answers.

Some may point to the beauty of nature; the immensity of space or the clock-work precision of the universe. They may reason that because these things exist – God must exist. Others may point to the experience of a relative or close friend: "God was real to my Grand-mother so He must be real. I believe God exists because she believed it." Still others find their belief in God linked to their belief in intangible things like truth, goodness, beauty or morality. See, for most people, God is merely the end result of a chain of reasoning rather than a true reality in their life.

Now, while each of these chains of reasoning is unique to the individual, they all have something in common: they do not know God thru personal experience. The possibility of having an intimate relationship with "God" has never entered their minds. While admitting God's existence, they fail to consider Him as being "knowable." Sadly, tho this is mainly true of all unbelievers, it is at least partially true of some Christians. Even tho they believe in Jesus and trust Him in one sense, God is still not a daily, personal reality to them. Unfortunately, they go thru their lives attempting to love an ideal or be loyal to some abstract doctrine or principle – the exhausting

treadmill of religious “activity.”

Our text today was written especially for those to whom God is unreal because they don't simply speak about Jesus Christ, but they present Him as the great witness of God, they reveal Jesus to be the great Revealer of the Father.

What makes someone a good witness? 1) They must have firsthand information. They must've seen or heard what they're testifying of. No judge in the land will accept hearsay evidence. 2) They must be willing to testify, to speak up and get involved. 3) They must be reliable. Their witness must be substantial and believable. These 3 requirements make for a perfect witness. By this standard, Jesus is the perfect witness concerning God and the things of God.

31- heaven- Here John stresses the fact that Jesus has firsthand information concerning God because of His origins. Because Jesus came “from above,” He alone possessed accurate knowledge of God the Father. This alludes to His supremacy over all the other teachers and prophets that came before. There is no sense of evil inferred on being “from the earth” but rather a sense of limitation. The OT prophets and teachers did dispense the truth but it was a partial truth; their insights were, at best, secondary. They only reported what God revealed to them. But Jesus is God incarnate. He came from heaven. Thus, He has revealed the truth perfectly out of the fullness of His knowledge.

If you want information about a person – go to someone who's close to that person. If you want info on a city – get it from a person from that city. If you want good info about God, you'll only get it from the Son of God. If you want info on heaven and the life of heaven, you'll only get it from Him who **comes from** heaven. When Jesus speaks about God and heavenly things, it's not info from a secondary source. He tells that which He Himself has seen and heard. Because Jesus alone knows God, He alone can give us the facts concerning God and these facts are the gospel!

But, the sending of Jesus into the world involves more than the sending of a prophet, as in OT times, or the sending of the apostles into the world as evangelists in the NT era. These men were messengers. They were sent by God. But Jesus is not a messenger, He is the messenger. It's true that John

the Baptist was sent by God and the disciples are later sent into the world. But neither John nor the 12 ever make any claim of independent revelation. They're only sent to bear witness to Jesus. Jesus alone speaks and acts out of the fullness of His knowledge of the Father. Thru the prophets, God spoke on earth but through Jesus Christ, God speaks from heaven!

The second requirement for being a perfect witness is that the witness must also be willing to testify. Was Jesus willing? Of course He was. He got involved. Thus, John writes, "**He testifies to what he has seen and heard...**"

32- Earlier, Jesus assured Nicodemus that He and those who followed Him speak only of what they know and have seen (**3:11**). We're now given a similar statement about Jesus. The phrase: "**what He has seen and heard**" is just another way of expressing certainty. The teaching of Jesus wasn't a hypothesis put forward for group discussion. He teaches what He knows to be true by His own experience. What He has seen and heard in the heavenly sphere is what He bears witness of in the earthly realm. We see this true portrayed all throughout His ministry.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce, what was His response? (**Mark 10:2-7**) Jesus was speaking from experience because He was there at the beginning! When He talks about **the days of Noah** in **Mt 24:37**, He speaks from experience. When Jesus told the Pharisees that "**Abraham rejoiced to see My day**" He was speaking from direct experience and that is exactly how they received the statement and why they tried to kill Him at that time (**John 8:56**).

Of course, the majority of Christ's teaching dealt with what He had seen and heard in eternity with the Father.

It's interesting that John uses the verb **testify** in the present tense here. We might tend to use it in the past tense, reasoning that Jesus came, bore His testimony and then returned to heaven. That's not what John does. For John, Jesus is still testifying. Where do we hear His testimony? In the Bible, of course! The Bible is not something that's dead, irrelevant, or out-dated. Not for John! And not for anyone who has come to know Christ and has experienced the living power of the Bible to speak on His behalf. The Bible is living. Christ is living. Thus, it's through the Bible that Jesus continues to speak and to bear His witness to heavenly things in our day.

But, even tho Jesus still speaks thru God's Word and even tho what He says has been proven to be supremely reliable, people in general do not accept it! The "no one" at the end of vs32 is not to be taken literally as vs33 will show. So, what's being said here? John has already made it abundantly clear in this chapter that we all must be born again (new birth). In our natural state, we will not accept Christ's witness. The world, as a whole, is not interested in the truth that Jesus came to bring. While that is true in general; thankfully, it is not true in every particular case.

33- The verb "received" does not refer to a continuous, day-by-day receiving of the witness of Jesus (tho that is still important). It actually refers to a deliberate act by which a person decides to accept Jesus and His witness of God. Anyone who does this does more. Their faith in God puts a seal of authenticity on the assertion that God is true! Seals were used extensively in ancient times because many people couldn't read. An official seal conveyed a clear message even to the illiterate. Seals were used to denote ownership as well as authentication (personal guarantee). That's the sense here: those who accept Jesus are accepting what God has said. They recognize the heavenly origins of Jesus and acknowledge the truth of God's revelation in Him. By their faith they proclaim God is true!

Of course, God is true whether I certify it by my faith or not. God's truth does not require our faith to support it but, by our faith, we do ourselves the honor of subscribing to God's truth & God considers Himself honored by our faith in Him. What is it exactly that we subscribe to by our faith? 1) That God is true to all the promises He made of Jesus by the prophets; that not one word of those promises have fallen to the ground. 2) That God is true to all the promises He made in Christ. We commit our lives and our eternal souls to the veracity (truthfulness) of God's divine character. The One to whom we give our faith is the One we give honor to. If this still seems a bit presumptuous, then **1 John 5:10** gives us the negative side of it. One can either: believe God and certify that He is true with their life or they can not believe God and basically call Him a liar.

34-35- Jesus also fulfilled the 3rd requirement for the perfect witness: His testimony was totally reliable. Why is this? Because the Father has not withheld any measure of the Spirit from the Son. Since there is perfect communion and communication between the Father and the Son, the

Father guarantees the truth and total reliability of Jesus' words.

This is not true of any other religious teacher; no other teacher would dare claim it. In the teaching of all the other religious teachers of this world, truth is always mixed with falsehood. Thus, those who teach, if they're smart, always point beyond themselves to that which is higher. Jesus didn't do this. Others point down the road to a far destination; while Jesus claims to be that destination. Others taught that they had aspects of the truth. Jesus taught that He was the truth. Others offered to show the way to God. Jesus declared in no uncertain terms that He is the way to God. When Jesus told Mary that her brother Lazarus would rise again, she acknowledged that he would in the resurrection at the last day. But Jesus had to correct her, "***I am the resurrection and the life...***" (John 11:25). You see; everything we hope for in this life and every expectation of good is only to be found in the reality of Jesus Christ.

36- One of the things Jesus has received from the Father is the authority to bestow spiritual life, the life of the age to come (eternity). Jesus bestows that life here and now on those who receive Him in faith and accept His witness. Since faith in Jesus is the only way to eternal life, those who refuse to place their faith in Him miss out on enjoying the life that He gives. Those who refuse to obey the Son cut themselves off from the benefits of His sin-removing work and their continued rebellion leaves them exposed to the wrath of God. This word ***wrath*** does not refer to some sudden gust of passion or an outburst of temper. Rather, it speaks of the settled displeasure of God against sin.

John says this wrath ***abides!*** It abides in this world, because there is no "statute of limitations" on sin. It abides in the next world, because those who reject Jesus cannot offer a suitable sacrifice for their own sins to God. The wrath of God abides and continues to abide until it is satisfied by receiving the perfect payment Jesus made on the cross. The wrath of God is not a popular subject today; many well-intentioned students try to emphasize the love of God and minimize the wrath of God by softening the expression or explaining it away but that's wrong. Without the wrath of God, we're left with a God who is unwilling to act against moral evil. The truth is, the immeasurable love of God is simply a necessary response to the immeasurable wrath of God. In fact, what else does the love of God rescue us from but the wrath of God?

What about Jesus? Is He who He says He is? If so, no one will escape the truth of His claims or the responsibility of His demands. Final truth about the world, humanity and God has been disclosed by Jesus Christ, who is the truth. In the end, we will be judged by our relationship to Him.

This emphasis of ch3 is on having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It's a living relationship that begin with the new birth. It's a loving relationship because He is the Bridegroom and we are the Bride. But, it's also a learning relationship because Jesus is the faithful witness who continues to share God's truth with us thru God's Word. What a privilege it is to receive His Word, meditate on it and make it part of our lives. 😊