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Questioning God

John 8:13-27

Intro: What would you do if you were about to be accused of a crime in a court of law by a particular witness? What would you do to minimize the impact of this damaging testimony? Most ordinary people would do nothing, especially if they were innocent. But, what if you were guilty? Not only that, what if you were also a good-for-nothing scoundrel who would stop at nothing to stay out of jail so you could continue your nefarious activities? If this were the case then you really only have 3 options: 1) eliminate the witness (illegal but effective). You could have someone silence them or at least threaten them to keep them quiet. This has happened in many cases that deal with serious criminals.

Maybe you're not a murderer but still want to "beat the rap," are there any legal options? 2) You could try to discredit the witness. Maybe the witness is a scoundrel or has lied in court before. A good attorney will look for anything they can find to get the jury to disregard anything the witness might say in this case. 3) You could attempt to have the testimony thrown out of court on a technicality. I have provided you 3 options to combat damaging testimony in court.

Why? These are exactly the same tactics that were used by the unscrupulous scoundrels who tried to discredit the testimony of Jesus concerning the nature of God and man's undeniable need for salvation.

Their 1st ploy was to try to eliminate Jesus. We saw this at the end of ch7, when the religious leaders tried to have Him arrested. They failed that time but would succeed 6 months later. Next, they tried to discredit Jesus by throwing doubt on His character so that no one would listen to Him anymore. That was the whole point of bringing the woman taken in adultery to Him: to trap Jesus by forcing Him to pass judgment for her or against her. Neither of these ploys worked. Their final option was to try to eliminate the force of Jesus' testimony based on a legal technicality.

This is the subject of the first part of our text today. Jesus has just declared to the gathered crowd that He is the light of the world, directly alluding to cloud that led Israel in the desert and explicitly applying the divine

characteristics and supernatural blessings of the cloud to Himself. Since God was thought of in terms of light and life, and since this claim referenced the cloud that symbolized God's presence with Israel, Jesus' words may have seemed almost blasphemous to the crowd. It was at least a claim to His right to have men and women follow Him. This, once again, forces the religious crowd to either accept His testimony of Himself or reject it. They reject it, of course, but how can they discredit this testimony? They've already tried to have Him arrested and failed. Jesus easily out-smarted them in the case of the woman. Maybe a technicality would suffice – they could at least try...

13-18- There's a principle in the Mosaic Law that states that no one could ever be convicted of a capital crime on the testimony of a single witness; 2 or 3 witnesses were always required. This principle is expressed in **Num 35:30**; **Deut 17:6** and **19:15**. This principle originally only concerned capital crimes but by Jesus' day, it had been interpreted so broadly for so long by the rabbinical authorities that it came to be applied to all testimony. Thus, nothing was to be believed unless more than one person could speak to it. And, of course, no one could testify concerning himself. The rulers now try to apply this principle to Jesus. Their point of attack was that, whether it was true or not, His claim was invalid because the testimony of one man concerning himself should be discounted.

In answering the charge that His testimony of Himself is invalid, Jesus makes 3 important points. Tho most folks don't care for legal technicalities, Jesus' response is simple and relevant today for believers and unbelievers alike.

1) Jesus states the obvious: to testify about Himself and the Father requires a superior source of knowledge and He's the only one on earth that possesses such knowledge (**14**). If the issue was one that concerned the human condition then the legal principle they are applying would be correct and useful but, when it comes to the character and nature of God, only God can testify to that. Here, God the Son bears witness both to Himself and to the Father. His testimony should be accepted because Jesus alone possessed a clear view of eternity.

2) Jesus defended His right to testify about Himself and the Father because His testimony is impartial (**15-16a**). Jesus says their judgment was

according to the flesh or “by human standards,” meaning all that’s human as opposed to that which is God. This involves the limitations of being human, specifically the areas of knowledge and objectivity.

All men tend to be harsh on others and easy on themselves and the religious rulers were no different. Jesus says His judgment is not limited like theirs, His judgment is impartial. It’s also sinless: according to the flesh implies sinfulness and Jesus denies this too. He is the sinless One. The distortions of sin cannot invalidate His testimony

3) Jesus then points out that ultimately, His testimony doesn’t stand alone but is supported by the word of the Father.

This alone should satisfy the rabbinical requirement of 2 or 3 witnesses to establish a fact. We saw in ch5 that the witness of the Father concerning Jesus is 3-fold consisting of the witness of John the Baptist, the witness of Jesus’ miraculous signs and the witness of the OT Scriptures.

Where do we stand on the testimony of Jesus Christ? What can we say about it? Well, it’s the testimony of Jesus Himself that is based on superior knowledge and complete impartiality that is also corroborated by the Father. The character of these witnesses is unquestionable and the testimonies agree! Who can discredit them? No one, not logically or rationally but that doesn’t seem to stop people from trying. At least, it didn’t stop the religious rulers!

19-27- If we’re going to grasp the importance of this chapter, we must understand that the relationship between Jesus and the religious rulers was deteriorating rapidly. **Ch5-8** record in detail the rejection of Jesus by the religious authorities that began with their opposing Jesus on His view of the Sabbath day in **ch5** and will break down completely at the end of this chapter when they attempt to kill Him themselves. In fact, **ch9** and following focuses on a new theme: the relationship of Jesus to those whom His Father has given Him. But for now, John is detailing the collapse civil discourse between Jesus and the powers that be and in our text, they have reached a new low.

Granted, they were already bad – they tried to arrest Him and failed; they tried to trap Him and failed; they tried to discredit His testimony based on a legal technicality and He proved too smart for them in this too. Now, they sink to a new low, the only recourse left for those who are wrong and have

been bested – they start to personal by making fun of Jesus. They do this by asking 3 insulting questions.

“Where is your father?” (19) This was at least a scornful rejection that there was a second witness to His claims. But it could also have been a reference to the questionable circumstances of His birth and their belief that Joseph wasn’t His father (seen again in v41). “Will he kill himself?” (22). The Jews believed that those who killed themselves went to the lowest part of Hades. Jesus had just said, where I go, you cannot come. They rightly understood that He spoke of His death, but they figured that since they would surely be going to heaven He must be going to hell (lowest part).

“Who are you?” (25) This effectively called Jesus a “nobody.” It’s a rejection of everything He had said about Himself. What was Jesus’ response to these questions? What was His reaction to their scorn? He answers their ridicule and scorn with the strongest statements concerning the eternal fate of the lost that we have seen so far in this Gospel.

Before we look at Jesus’ response, I must first state that it is not wrong to question God, in fact, the OT is filled with such questions; especially the Psalms. It seems as tho David made it a habit to ask God all kinds of questions: Ps 8:4; 13:1-2; 15:1. The prophetic books, Moses, Joshua, Samuel – all sent plenty of questions God’s way. Don’t forget Job! We should never think that God is above answering our questions. The problem is not the questions but the motive behind the questions. If someone is seeking truth and inquiring of God to for truth, guidance or direction, God is honored by those kinds of questions and will graciously provide answers.

But, some questions aren’t used to discover truth; they’re used to resist the truth and justify a stubborn refusal to believe the truth. That’s the motivation behind the questions the religious leaders now posed to Jesus. They come from a combination of willful confusion and utter contempt of Jesus. They ask hoping only for answers they could use to trap or condemn Jesus with. Jesus doesn’t have any new answers, just clearer revelation of their eternal destiny!

Jesus first responds to these scornful questions by stating that questions like these aren’t asked by those who know Him so, those who ask them neither know Him nor the Father. He makes this point twice (v19 & 23). Despite all their religious education and positions of authority, these men

didn't know God, that's how they could ask such spiteful questions. They're resisting truth, attempting to justify a refusal to believe what God has already made known.

God deals with the same phenomena in [Rom 1](#). It says God gave certain people over to reprobate minds because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge ([28](#)). Certain things about God are known to all men ([20](#)). But, because people don't like what they know about God and certainly don't want to accept the conclusions that flow from it, they refuse to retain this knowledge of God and therefore willfully reject Him. The problem with this is: God always trouble the hearts and minds of those who are not at peace with Him through the death of Jesus Christ. So, since men don't like to be troubled in their minds or pricked in their consciences, they do everything they can think of to banish God from their knowledge. One way is to ask questions, not to seek for truth but to cast doubt. The sad thing is that the knowledge of God exists to be seized by those who will have it.

[Rom 1](#) reminds us of one other truth. The truth is in the form of a warning of what God does to those who will not retain the knowledge of Him. We are told that God "gave them over." This means that since these individuals have abandoned God, God has abandoned them. They gave God up, so God gave them up. Of course, this doesn't occur in one fell swoop but through a vicious cycle, a downward spiral of sin and continued rejection of truth. The 1st drop was when men refused to glorify God as God and were unthankful; God gave them over to uncleanness (sexual sin). Then, when men exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, God gave them over to vile affections (sexual perversions). Finally, as we read in [vs28](#), when they didn't like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to something far worse than sexual sins. He gave them over to a reprobate mind; rather: He abandoned them to their own corrupt judgment. That's a terrible fate, and it's the fate the religious rulers were facing if they failed to repent and turn to Jesus as their Savior.

Next, Jesus told them that the day of God's grace wouldn't last forever. He did this by referring to His own death and departure and the fact that they would also die ([21](#)). The day of God's grace is not endless so the personal act of entering into a right relationship with Jesus Christ should not be put off. To delay is crazy! One has suggested that the greatest reason why you should prepare to meet your God is the simple fact that you must meet your

God! Unless your case is settled out of court by personally responding to salvation through Jesus Christ then you must appear before the judgment seat of God the Father and answer for your rejection of Jesus.

Then, Jesus responds to their scorn men by telling them that if they refused to believe on Him as their Savior and Messiah, they would die in their sins (21, 24). To die in sin means to die with the burden of your sin on yourself and be forced to bear the penalty of sin, (spiritual death). The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Physical death is the separation of the soul and the spirit from the body. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul and the spirit from God. To die in sin is to die separated from God and to remain so forever. This fact is still true whether you are aware of it or not. Many people try to cover their sin but God's judgment will reveal it all and then there will be a reckoning.

Finally, Jesus says the most sobering thing of all: if those who refuse to believe on Him continue to do so and thus, die in their sins, they would go to hell and not heaven. Of course, Jesus doesn't mention hell by name in our text but the existence of hell as the destiny of unbelievers is still implied. Jesus said, "You will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come". (21b) Where's He going? To heaven. So, if they couldn't go where He's going, they couldn't come to heaven and would remain without God and apart from God forever. The scary part is, there's no escape from this apart from Jesus Christ. Yes, you can reject Him but you'll be rejecting your "get out of eternal jail free" card.

Our text has relayed both Jesus' testimony and His defense. His rebuttal of religious scorn is quite applicable for us today but what about His testimony of Himself? What does this mean for us? How is this wrangling over Jewish law relevant for believers and unbelievers today?

1) We must not trust our own judgment on spiritual matters. Our knowledge is limited and we are never impartial. We cannot trust our own way of looking at things. This is exactly the point of **Prov 3:5-6**.

2) We can trust the word of Jesus completely (and should). Why? Because He is who He is! Now, there's still a good bit in the Christian life that we don't understand and maybe even aspects of Christian truth that we don't really care for and wish would go away. But that's not an option. Whatever

Jesus says must be believed without question, and our own reasoning on spiritual matters must be subordinated to His. This is what Paul refers to in **II Cor 10:5**.

3) If the word of Jesus Christ is true, then we should accept him as our Savior and follow him as our Lord. Have you done that? If not, will you face the evidence of His claims? If you are in doubt about His claims, will you ask God for clarity? When He responds and provides that clarity, will you accept it? God does not want you to be in confusion, He wants you to be certain in your knowledge of Christian truth. Are you up to the challenge? God is! 😊