

CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S WITNESSES, PART 2
(SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2019)

Scripture: 10 Words; 1 John 5:7-12

INTRODUCTION

C. S. Lewis made famous a statement that Jesus is either a liar, lunatic, or Lord.

I read a very good article recently which showed that C. S. Lewis was not the first to make this statement. However, because Lewis became quite famous as a writer, we associate this statement with him most often.

Lewis's point and others who have made this statement is that you cannot believe simply that Jesus taught nice things.

Lewis stated:

Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher.¹

Now what is the argument that John makes in verses 7-12 that is similar to this argument?

John has argued that there is sufficient evidence that God has given showing that Jesus is the Son of God.

There is the witness of the water – the baptism of Jesus and the testimony of the Father at His baptism.

There is the witness of the blood at the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus was accepted. The veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. The earth shook after Jesus died.

As Matthew also points out, there were some people who were raised to life.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/is-c-s-lewiss-liar-lord-or-lunatic-argument-unsound/>

The centurion at the foot of the cross was led to confess, "Surely this was the Son of God."

The Holy Spirit is the third witness to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

So, what John says here is that either God is true, or you blaspheme Him and call Him a liar.

Last week I emphasized that there is no reason for any doubt.

God has given sufficient witness to the truth of Jesus Christ and the glorious message of the gospel.

Today as we focus on verses 10-12, we see the blessing of believing the testimony and the serious nature of unbelief.

What joy and blessing in believing that Jesus is the Son of God. What blasphemy in rejecting the truth of the gospel.

We will look at verses 10-12 in three parts, one verse at a time.

1) BELIEF OR BLASPHEMY, V. 10

Last week I mentioned that the word translated as **witness** is a key word in verses 6-12.

The word witness is used 10x in these verses both as a noun and verb. The root is the word *martus*.

6 - bear witness

7 - bear witness

8 - *questionable reading*

9 - witness (3x)

10 - witness, testimony, the verb **given**

11 - testimony

The language is that of a courtroom.

The verb as it is used here means a solemn and lasting verdict.²

Now in verse 10, John writes that he who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.

The verb **believe** is another important verb in 1 John.

What is not common is the expression **has the witness in himself**.

You won't find any other passage that uses this same expression, but there are three other passages that are similar. Listen to them.

John 5:36 But I [Jesus] have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Rev. 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "*See that you do not do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

As I have mentioned now many times the language of this book or letter is so very rich.

To believe and trust in Jesus Christ is to then receive the witness that the Father has given.

And this witness is part of our calling and will lead to strife and warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We should note that the verb **believes** in verse 10 is in the present tense. This form of the verb is most common for John.

We have to be careful as we understand this properly.

² Yarbrough, 286.

John is not denying the transformative work of God in bringing dead sinners to new life as they come to saving faith.

But on the other hand, it is not simply that at one time we believe and then move on.

We must **continue to believe**, not doubting our salvation or God's grace, but in light of God's truth and grace.

The second half of verse 10 shows how serious it is to reject the witness that the Father has given.

He who does not believe has made God a liar.

John uses the word liar 5 times in 1 John with two of them being used with respect to God.

1John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

This is serious blasphemy to reject God's witness and say that God the Father is a deceiver, a fraud.

We observe again that Scripture in terms of salvation leaves nothing in a shade of gray.

You either accept and believe God's truth or you reject it!

Now many people don't realize how serious their rebellion is. This is part of the challenging message that we are called to communicate.

It is not simply that Jesus makes your life better so why don't you add him to your life.

If you reject the Lord Jesus Christ, you are spitting in the face of God.

John Calvin wrote:

Therefore, though we may grant that a man in other parts of his life is like an angel, yet his sanctity is diabolical as long as he rejects Christ. Thus we see some under the Papacy vastly pleased with the mere mask of sanctity, while they still most obstinately resist the gospel. Let us then understand, that it is the beginning of true religion,

obediently to embrace this doctrine, which he has so strongly confirmed by his testimony.

Now before we move to verse 11, we should ask the question, what about those who have not heard the message of salvation in Jesus Christ?

Are people who have never heard about Jesus Christ guilty of calling God a liar?

This is where the truth of Romans 1 should be part of the answer to this question.

Those who have never heard about Jesus maybe are not guilty of what John is saying here but they are without excuse as they stand before God.

Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

All men are without excuse.

Some even more express their blasphemy when hearing about Jesus they reject the witness that God has given.

This is a very serious and weighty matter, isn't it?

Let's move to verse 11.

2) GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE IN HIS SON, v. 11

John again uses the word witness or as is translated in verse 11, the word **testimony**.

Now there is a question on exactly how we understand John's use of the word testimony or witness.

Is John saying that the testimony is that God has given us eternal life?

This is how some versions translate John's language here. Some commentators would argue that verse 11b is not the **content** of the testimony but the **result** of the witness or what this witness means.³

This might be a better way of understanding what John is saying.

What we again see is the familiar but still so precious truth of what we believe in terms of salvation.

God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

Thirty-seven times you find the expression eternal life in the NT and three times in 1 John.

This precious phrase is found throughout John's gospel.

It is the expression found in the familiar verses John 3:15 and 3:16 and later in 3:36.

Jesus spoke to the woman at the well about eternal life found in the water that He could give.

Jesus gave this precious promise about eternal life in John 10:28.

John 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Listen to two other passages.

Acts 13:48 ¶ Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are reminded that salvation is not just a ticket to heaven when you die.

Eternal life is a present possession for God's people.

Eternal life is life that is enjoyed entirely in Jesus Christ.

³ Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC 51; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 287. See also Yarbrough, 289.

And, of course, we see that eternal life is not something earned; it is something that is given. It is graciously given by God to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And notice this eternal life is in the Son.

And we enjoy this eternal life because Jesus died a bloody and shameful death on the cross.

Robert Yarbrough wrote:

This makes the unbelief of 5:10 all the more poignant, because not only has God in his Son proclaimed the truth and attested richly to it, but his gracious act also has as its goal the gift of eternal life to its recipients. Some, however, would rather make God a liar than stoop (as they would see it) to receiving the gift.⁴

Let us conclude with verse 12.

3) YOU EITHER HAVE LIFE IN CHRIST OR YOU HAVE DEATH, V. 12

John in this verse lays out another **either/or** statement similar to verse 10.

Now John's language today I suppose would rightfully be considered almost hate speech today. You are not allowed to say today that there is only one way to true salvation.

Truth is narrow-minded.

Truth means that everything else that falls short is false.

We should feel the weight of what John is saying here because it certainly goes against what the world teaches and what we naturally want to believe.

It is not that we have to justify what John is saying here, but as John Calvin points out what John says seems to be inconsistent with reason. Have there not been noble people who have not known Christ?

⁴ Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament), Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition, 290.

We can only appreciate the truth of verse 12 when we realize that God sees through all the external appearances that men display.

God sees the true filthiness of the heart.

Nothing can be hidden from him.

Further we must again confess that the only source of righteousness is based on what Christ accomplished on the cross.

God's judgment and curse rest on all except for those who are in Christ.

There is no other way of deliverance.

So, John and the Word of God are not narrow-minded or restrictive any more than the only way to jump out of plane safely is to have a working parachute.

Truth in Christ brings freedom.

A barber who was an atheist once was talking with a minister as they rode together through the slums of a large city.

The barber said, "If there is a loving God, how can He permit all this poverty, suffering, and violence among these people? Why doesn't he save them all from this?"

Just then, a disheveled bum crossed the street.

He was unshaven and filthy, with long scraggly hair hanging down his neck.

The minister pointed to the bum and said, "You are a barber and claim to be a good one, so why do you allow that man to be so unkempt and unshaven?"

"Why, why..." the barber stuttered, "he never came to me to fix him up."

"Exactly," said the minister. "Men are what they are because they reject God's help."⁵

⁵ Michael Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, 317.

This might not be the best illustration, but it contains at least part of the truth of what we confess.

Men so easily want to blame God and at the same time reject God's truth.

CONCLUSION

What have we seen today?

What joy and blessing in believing that Jesus is the Son of God. What blasphemy in rejecting the truth of the gospel.

1) Precious truths of salvation and the gospel

2) Reaching the lost

3) Standing firm for God's truth

Connection with the Lord's Supper.

1) Witness of the blood.

2) We testify as we eat and drink that we receive this witness.

3) We eat and drink testifying that we enjoy eternal life in the Son.

4) As we eat and drink we also testify that he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Prayer

Hymn 365

BENEDICTION: HEBREWS 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.