

On Highest Testimony

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Bible Verse: 1 John 5:6-12
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We come back to 1 John and we're so grateful that we've had this opportunity to study it like we have had. We have another two or a couple of weeks in 1 John before we move on to other things, but tonight we're able to address a most fundamental question, a most fundamental issue that is very very central for you to resolve in your own mind as you contemplate your Christian faith and your growth in Christ. It is so vitally important for us to know why we believe what we believe and we believe on the highest of testimony. Tonight's message is titled "On Highest Testimony." I'm grateful to Matt for having read the passage earlier and I want to go through it again with you as we start and have you focus on the emphasis on testimony that is in this passage. Notice the verb and the noun testifies and testimony that is woven throughout everything that we read tonight and you will see that the theme, the focus of this passage is the testimony that God has made to his Son.

So let's look at it from that perspective with verse 6 where it says,

6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Nine times either the verb or the noun are used in that passage referring to testimony, and if you go to a courtroom during a trial, you will hear testimony from witnesses that are attesting to facts so that a matter can be established and that's the sense in which this passage is teaching us here today what is the testimony, what is the attestation to Jesus Christ upon which we believe, and we believe on highest testimony and here's what I mean by that. If I were to ask you why you believe what you believe as a Christian, most

of you would say, if not all of you would say, "I believe because it's in the Bible," and that's a good answer but let's press it a little bit further. Why do we believe the Bible? And then people start to drop off a little bit as you start to press the issue on these questions, but we believe the Bible because the Bible was written by the apostles. The Bible was written by the apostles and that's why we believe the Bible is because it was written by the apostles. I've preached messages on this, you can find them online, just do a search for "apostles" and it will come up. That's a very important point to understand. We believe the Bible because it was written by the apostles. That's one of the reasons why it's so important to realize that there aren't apostles today; the apostles were a unique group appointed by Christ, and I'm getting ahead of myself. But you ask the question, you approach it even further back. Well, why do we believe the apostles? Yeah, you see the logic of this? We're building, you know, an epistemology here why we believe what we believe, you know, we believe because we see it in the Bible, we believe the Bible because the New Testament, speaking in New Testament terms, it was written by the apostles, the Old Testament by God's prophets, of course. Why do we believe the apostles? Because the apostles were appointed by Christ and we see that recorded for us in the Gospels where he in Matthew 10 and other places where he appointed the 12, and so it's important for us to understand that and Christ is our highest authority. You know, we've spoken to that. Christ affirmed the Old Testament, he pre-authenticated the New Testament, and so we have this wonderful foundation of testimony given to us but you could push the question and this passage pushes the question even one further point back and we ask the question on what ground do we believe Jesus Christ. Now he is self-authenticating but there is more than even Christ's testimony to himself that undergirds the reason why we believe in Christ, we see that Jesus Christ was attested during his time on earth by no one less than God the Father and that's what we're going to look at here tonight. And so as we step back, as we walk back through what we believe, we find that there is this magnificent authority that undergirds everything that we believe. We teach out of the Bible because the Bible is the word of God and we believe on that basis. The Bible was written by the apostles, we believe because the apostles were appointed by Christ and we can know that Christ, the biblical Christ, is the true Son of God to whom we look because he was attested to by God the Father.

Now why is that all so important here? Well, false teachers in John's day had confused his readers. They had messed up and muddied up the waters. There were false teachers that were saying that the man Jesus was only an illusion, he wasn't a real man, he was simply an illusion and they spoke in persuasive terms and were leading people astray. Other people, other false teachers in the day would say that, no, the man was real enough but the power was not in the man himself, the power came as the Christ-spirit came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him before he was crucified so that Jesus was only a man during most of the course of his earthly life and it was only as this so-called Christ-spirit came upon him temporarily in order to manifest the things that Jesus taught.

Now that might sound kind of esoteric but let me just point out to you and show you why that's so very important to understand why that is wrong because that kind of teaching does nothing less than destroy any possibility of salvation for those who believe it. You must believe in the true Christ in order to be saved. You can't make up one of your own.

The equation is so very simple when you think about it. If you have a false Christ, you have a false salvation and you are therefore still in your sins, and so it is very essential for us to know that we have believed in the true Christ, and so to deny that Jesus was a real man destroys the atonement because he had to be a man in order to die as a substitute for men. You can only have an effective substitute if there is a correspondence between the sacrifice and the one who is being saved. That's why the blood of bulls and goats could never truly take away sins in the Old Testament according to the testimony of Hebrews. At the same time we must understand this, is that Jesus Christ was fully God and he was always God. It wasn't that something came upon him after a natural birth, Jesus was God Incarnate, he was God the Son who came down from heaven and took on human flesh, he added flesh to his deity, and he had to be God throughout that process, he had to be God in his death if his death was going to have an infinite effect, was going to be able to atone for the sins of many. If he was only a man, he could only atone for one, his own. But no, Christ was fully God, he was fully man, and that is what John has been emphasizing throughout this letter is the nature of who Christ is so that we would believe in the true Christ.

Now the connection may not be immediately obvious to you but you must know the true Christ if you are going to experience the blessings for which John wrote. He wrote in order to promote our joy, chapter 1, verse 4. He wrote to promote our holiness, chapter 2, verse 1. And he wrote to promote our assurance of salvation, chapter 5, verse 13. And all of those spiritual blessings, true salvation and eternal life, joy in Christ, holiness and sanctification, and assurance of salvation, they are built on this foundation of who Christ really is. If you take away the true foundation, everything else collapses on top of it. And so our doctrine of Christ is essential and that's why it is important for a church to teach doctrine because it is doctrine that leads us to the true Christ and true salvation.

Now the first century heresies that John was addressing are different from the false teachers that we face today but the response for us is the same. We go back to the true Christ. Stated differently, we turn to God's testimony to see what he has said about his Son. We must know what God says about his Son.

Now I want to say something of consequence here. It's important for you and I to know why we believe. I understand that a hardened unbeliever is not going to be persuaded by the things that I say here tonight unless the Spirit of God would come upon him to open his eyes and ears that he might believe and be saved. I understand that but we're speaking here, we're gathered together here as the people of God. We accept the testimony of Scripture. We accept what God has said. We come as believers, not as skeptics. And so from that realm from that position of understanding and knowing who we are, it's important for us to understand why we believe what we believe, and when we turn to God's testimony we find the answer to those questions. I find this very very helpful in my own heart and in my own life, to be able to just walk through in the simplest of ways, in the most basic of ways why it is that we believe what we believe. And before we get into the text, let me just say this, my friends, what we're talking about here tonight and everything that I said as I walked you through that little thing, that's an expensive theological word. You can look it up later if that kind of confuses you. That thing, you

know, we believe because it's in the Bible, the Bible was written by the apostles, the apostles were appointed by Christ, Christ was attested by God the Father, I find that very helpful to just rehearse things like that in my mind and so, "Okay, I have a basic understanding of why I believe." And here's my point in re-emphasizing that and repeating myself already this early in the message is this, is that these reasons that we believe, my friends, they are all objective by which I mean they do not depend upon your opinions or your feelings about the situation. It's not that I feel like I believe and therefore it must be true. No. No. No. No. These things were true before you were born, they will be true after you are born, they would be true and they are true even if you had never existed. They are outside of you, they are independent of you, therefore they are objective and when we realize that this is objective truth that we base our faith on, that we rest our hope of eternal salvation on, then we realize that it is something solid. It is not something that ebbs and flows with my performance as a Christian, or the way that I feel about things from day to day. No, there is a stability and a permanence and an eternity to it that is grounded in things that are outside of us and it's important for us to understand that we believe based on God's testimony, not on something that we feel inside in ourselves.

So let's turn to God's testimony and see what he has said about his Son Jesus Christ. So our first point for tonight is this, is to deal with the issue of the content of God's testimony. The content of God's testimony. God the Father, and let's just step back and remember who we're dealing with here, God is the highest authority in the universe. There is no one higher than him. We cannot verify his testimony by an other authority, by an independent authority that somehow is higher than God and certifies him to us. Science cannot certify God to us. It is under God. It is below him. The way that we think, the way that we feel about things, everything is below the authority of God and so what God says is the final word, the final authority about what is true and especially that must be true when he's talking about who his Son is. That is so very important to recognize. And what has God testified about Jesus? He's done this, I love this, this is a wonderful passage of Scripture, God has testified to all of humanity that Jesus of Nazareth is his appointed Christ.

Look at verse 6 with me here. Verse 6 says,

6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

Now when you first read that, that might seem to be a little bit of an obscure text. What is he talking about here? Well, let's just unpack it kind of phrase by phrase. When he says, "This is the One," context tells us that he is talking about Jesus Christ. The one of who he is speaking at the beginning of verse 6 is obviously Jesus. At the end of verse 5, he had referred to Jesus as the Son of God, and then after he says, "This is the One," there's an appositive there, Jesus Christ. And so both before and after the phrase, "This is the One," he has alluded to Jesus Christ and so "This is the One" refers to Jesus Christ based on the context of the passage here, and so somehow, somehow he is teaching us something

about Christ in what he is writing in this passage, and what he says about Christ is this: he came by water; he came by blood; and that the Spirit is somehow testifying to him.

Now just by way of remembrance here, let's remember that we've seen throughout 1 John that he's been speaking in certainties and absolutes, "By this we know. By this we know. I've written these things so that you know." And so he's strengthening our assurance and what he is doing is he is explaining how God's testimony to Jesus strengthens our assurance that we have believed in the true Christ, and what he is saying here as I'll show you in a moment, the span of it is this, is that God the Father testified to Jesus at crucial points in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in a way that makes us certain that we've believed in the true one. It is by water and by blood that God manifested Jesus as the true Christ to us, along with the testimony of the Spirit that we will get to.

Well, what could he possibly be referring to when he speaks about water? And when did God testify to Jesus in a way that dealt somehow with water? Well, your first subpoint here for tonight. We're looking at the testimony of God to Christ, the first subpoint A here is God's testimony at Jesus' baptism. God's testimony at Jesus' baptism. God testified to his Son by water when Jesus was baptized.

Look at Matthew 3 with me and John is using a shorthand reference to these highlights in the ministry of Christ. In Matthew 3:13, you can turn there with me. Matthew 3:13 through 17 says this. Matthew 3:13 says,

13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens [this is God the Father speaking] a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

And so at his baptism God the Father publicly testified to all that were present there to indicate that Jesus Christ was his Son. To be his Son was to share his nature and in affirming him as the one in whom he is well-pleased, God is saying that, "My Son fulfills everything that I require." God testified to his Son at Jesus' baptism so that this man Jesus whom people saw during his ministry and heard him speak and the one of whom the apostles testified to, it is that Jesus in whom God is well-pleased. God made him known in the waters of his baptism. He came to us by water, God testified by water that Jesus was his beloved Son.

Now just by way of going beyond what John said but to point out that God the Father had done this at other times as well, turn briefly to Matthew 17. This is outside of what John is alluding to but it is important for us to see this as well, to recognize that this Christ who

was publicly recognized and publicly acclaimed and publicly listened to, throughout his earthly life God the Father was testifying to him from heaven to certify him as the one and only Savior of the world, his one and only Son, so that in Matthew 17 we see the account of the transfiguration and in verse 1 of Matthew 17 it says,

1 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Peter didn't realize what he was speaking. He was putting Christ on the level of Moses and a prophet when they are all obviously infinitely below Christ himself. Well, in verse 5 God the Father corrects Peter's misunderstanding and in verse 5,

5 While [Peter] was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." 8 And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

So that as great as it in a human level would have been to see Moses and Elijah in that realm, God the Father testifies to his Son that he is utterly transcendent of those representatives of the law and the prophets. Christ is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets and therefore we are to look to him and to look to him alone, and he says at this time just like he did at his baptism, "This is My beloved Son and I am well-pleased with Him. Hear Him."

Well, you know, look, we read about that in the climate-controlled comfort of the 21st century here today but understand that this testimony was of blinding significance. Jesus, it says that his face shone like the sun, you know, and you know that if you look at the sun for just a moment, it burns your eyes and it hurts. The glory of the majesty of the star in the heavens is far too great for us to bear the presence of. And in the book of Acts when Jesus appeared to Paul it says that he was brighter than the sun. Well, what we have here, then, is God supernaturally manifesting himself through the person of Christ, the radiant beams of his deity are let loose through his humanity that was otherwise veiling them, and in that blinding display of Shekinah glory, God speaks on top of it and says, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him." Well, what more testimony could we want than that, than to realize that Christ appeared like that and in the transfiguration added to that was the affirmation of the voice of God the Father, "This is My beloved Son," saying again what he had said in the waters of baptism, "This is My beloved Son. This man whom you see shares My nature. He shares My essence as deity. He is My Son in that sense, and so hear Him."

Well, look, the reality of it is, the reality from God's perspective is for you and me, look, our only responsibility when it comes to right thinking, our responsibility is to think God's thoughts after him. We should think like God does. That's the best and the highest right thinking that we can possibly do and what God says about this man Jesus is, "He's My Son. He has My nature. Hear Him." And we receive him on the basis of the testimony of God the Father. If you believe in the unique deity of Christ, if you believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world, then you are in harmony with the thoughts of God about his own Son and that is something that the Holy Spirit makes known to us as he illumines our understanding to the word of God. But for the first century audience, God publicly affirmed Jesus in a way that leaves no doubt about who he is. Now John the apostle, having been an eyewitness to these things, having heard from the lips of Jesus, John the apostle now repeats them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the world and of the church for all time immemorial.

So God has testified in water to the person of his Son. Well, what about this testimony of the blood? Keep your finger in Matthew for a moment and let's just touch base, let's check back in, as it were, with John in 1 John 5 and look at verse 6 again to just remind us of what we are doing here and why we are interpreting Scripture by Scripture in the way that we're doing it here this evening. Verse 6, "This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood." And so we have a testimony of blood by which Jesus has been certified to us. Well, where did he shed his blood? Where was his blood poured out but at the cross, right? At his crucifixion. And what do we read about the crucifixion that would testify to Christ as being the Son of God?

Look at Matthew 27 beginning in verse 51, and actually we'll start in verse 45 because the narrative is so precious to us. Matthew 27:45,

45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" 47 And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." 48 Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. 49 But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

At this point his death had accomplished, Jesus had borne the wrath of God on behalf of his people and he gave up his life, he voluntarily yielded up his spirit. Now what happened at that moment? What happened when he died? We sometimes forget about this aspect of it but it's been in the Scriptures for 2,000 years, there's no reason for us to miss it. Verse 51,

51 ... behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Now friends, without going into the details of everything that happened there between the tearing of the veil in the temple, and the earthquake, and the resurrection of the saints, what I want you to see is this, is that there were multiple miraculous signs that attended the death of Christ when he shed his blood on our behalf. God through these events was supernaturally testifying to the fact that this one who had just died was his beloved Son.

Now the centurion who was there, look at verse 54, how can we be confident that we are understanding the import of those miraculous signs in the proper way? Well, just keep reading, verse 54,

54 Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

And so it was essential for a miraculous testimony, or better stated maybe, it was certainly fitting for miraculous events to attend the death of Christ as he died on the cross. Understand and remember this, that the death by crucifixion was a common method of execution at that time and it was a method of execution that symbolized Roman conquest over the victim. They die in utter disgrace. They die in utter agony. They die in utter humiliation. And that is the death that Christ died. It would have been quite easy for the witnesses around the cross at that time to misinterpret the significance of that death and simply think that it was like one of the thousands of others that have occurred in this realm over the past many years. You could not think that way after such a severe earthquake happens, and the temple curtain is torn in two from top to bottom, and people are resurrected from the dead attending to the reality of the fact that this was a unique death. And the centurion, the Roman soldier who was there supervising the death, as it were, lends his testimony and says, "This was the Son of God!" And the centurion giving verbal testimony to what God intended us to understand by these miraculous events, that he was testifying, he was certifying, he was attesting to Jesus Christ as his beloved Son at the moment of his death.

So when Jesus shed his blood, God the Father faithfully testified to him. When he died in humiliation, his Father affirmed him. When he submitted to a baptism and a baptism that symbolized repentance from sin of which he had none to repent of, when he humbled himself under the ministry of John the Baptist in that way, the Father affirms him, "This is no sinner before you, this is My Son." When he dies on the cross, "This is no common criminal, this is My Son. I will manifest that, I will affirm that to you by multiple simultaneous miraculous events so that no one who is here can miss it." And then it's recorded in Scripture for our study later on. So you have the testimony at his baptism, you have God the Father's testimony at his crucifixion, and beloved, let's just, I keep

saying this tonight more than usual, let's step back and remember what we're saying here. John in 1 John 5 is making a big big deal about testimony and we say, "Okay, so what is that testimony?" Water testifying to Christ. Where did we see water testifying to Christ? At his baptism. Where did we see blood testifying to Christ? At his crucifixion. In both places God in different ways testifying majestically to the essence of who Jesus was. He was his eternal Son. He was God in human flesh.

Now those are historical facts that Matthew has recorded to us. What is it, what is it that gives us certainty about it today? What gives power to those historical facts in our hearts as believers? How do we receive the testimony of God that he has given to his Son? Well, let's realize that that's not automatic, in one sense. It's not automatic because billions of people throughout the world reject this testimony, don't they? The fact that they reject it does not lessen the truth of it, it does not impugn the testimony of God one bit the fact that he's disbelieved because God cannot lie, Titus 1:2. God cannot lie but men still disbelieve. How is it that you and I, then, believe? What is it that gives power to these historical facts that we've been reviewing?

Well, let's go back to 1 John now 5:6 through 8. 1 John 5:6-8 and he says this, he says,

It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

The third aspect of God's testimony to his Son is this: it's God's testimony by the Holy Spirit. God's testimony by the Holy Spirit, a testimony that is happening and ongoing even as we speak today. So by water, baptism. By blood, at the crucifixion. And now the Spirit of God is called to bear witness and to testify also that this Jesus is God in human flesh. And so you and I have the benefit as believers that the Holy Spirit has illumined our minds, he has given us understanding, he has taken away our unbelieving hostile heart and placed within us a principle that is disposed to believe in Christ and he affirms in our heart that what we are reading in the Scriptures is true. The Spirit of God bears testimony, he affirms to us the truthfulness of what we read in the Scripture. So, beloved, the Holy Spirit testifies to the person of Christ in the hearts of men. That testimony of the Spirit has been an ongoing theme in this letter of 1 John. He has been saying this throughout and this is one of the reasons that we know that we are understanding the testimony properly and this passage properly.

Go back to chapter 2, verse 20, if you will. Chapter 2, verse 20 where John says, he says,

20 you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

The Spirit of God has come upon you so that you would know that Jesus is the Christ. The Spirit has been given to you. He dwells within you. He abides with you. He helps you. And in his supernatural work within our hearts, he gives understanding to our mind and strength to our hearts that we might believe what is being written and what has been written for our understanding.

Now go down just a few verses there in chapter 2 where he says in verse 26, he says,

26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you [you don't need special outside teachers going beyond the Bible] you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

We have an anointing from the Holy Spirit who teaches us. We have the best, the highest of teachers, the Holy Spirit teaches us and instructs us through God's word so that we understand and grasp these things and believe them. And so watch this, as Christians we are not believing on the simple basis of our unaided intellect, our unaided intellect would have led us into darkness. No, the Spirit of God opened our mind to understand. He gave sight to our blind eyes. He gave life to our dead heart. He gave hearing to our deaf ears. And empowered us and enabled us to believe and to understand this is the testimony of the Spirit to our hearts that affirms everything that God the Father said about Jesus Christ.

He said it elsewhere too, chapter 4, verse 13. Look at it with me. How do we know these things to be true? Why do you and I believe when so many others do not? Verse 13,

13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. [And John writing as a circle of the apostles says this,] 14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

The Spirit has given us understanding. The Spirit is the truth. The Spirit is the one who has made all of this real in our hearts and in our understanding so that 2,000 years ago God was testifying to Christ in the waters of baptism and in his blood at the crucifixion, now the Holy Spirit is certifying all of that to our hearts. And as you look at chapter 5, verse 6, notice that it says it is the Spirit who testifies. This is an ongoing witness that he bears to Christ since the resurrection. It's a witness that never ceases. When God saves you, the Spirit comes within you, he comes in permanently, he comes in eternally, and he fuels this in your mind and reinforces it as you study the word of God with a believing heart.

So kind of cool, I think, these things. What shall we conclude from the fact that the water testifies to Christ? The blood testifies to Christ? The Spirit testifies to Christ? Well, in Deuteronomy 19:15, you don't need to turn there, but in Deuteronomy 19:15 it says this, on the testimony of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed, and what we have here, what John has given us is three witnesses, the water, the blood and the Spirit, that are all saying the same thing, that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, he is the only Savior of the world, and therefore to believe in him for who he really is is to believe in the true Savior and to obtain a true salvation, and through those three testimonies God has certified Christ to us. We have a certificate of authenticity, metaphorically speaking,

handed to us that attests to Jesus, and on that certification are three different signatures, the water, the blood and the Spirit, all on the highest testimony of God himself telling us, "This is the true Savior of the world."

Well, friends, Christian brothers and sisters, if we have believed in Jesus as the Savior of the world, if you have believed in him as your Savior and you've trusted him, then the only conclusion is this, is that God has led you to the true Savior and that your sins are forgiven and you have eternal life that can never be taken away. And so when you understand the basis upon which you believe, you can understand how it promotes assurance when just a few verses later from where we're at right now at this moment in the text, he says, look at it in verse 13, he says,

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Now look, I understand that we all have people in our lives that would deny the testimony; that would mock Christ; that would deny the truth of Scripture. There are all kinds of well-paid, high-ranking scholars out there who can write books and deny everything that I have said here tonight and they can marshal arguments that superficially look really appealing and persuasive as they put things together and distort facts and all of that. What you and I have to understand is this, is that there is a higher testimony, the highest of testimony contradicts them. They may contradict God with what they say but God himself contradicts them and we believe the highest authority not self-appointed authorities whose breath is in their nostrils. And as we understand this the way that these truths align, then we are put in a position of strength and assurance that can withstand the assaults of philosophical arguments that try to contradict what we believe. We believe on the highest of testimonies.

Friends, the matter of Christ is established. It is over. The matter is settled. God has testified to his Son and all questions and doubts and contradictions are therefore silenced. And so we can step back, as it were, as we're thinking about Christ and who he is, thinking about him on the cross, in the grave, resurrected, ascended, and at the right hand of the Father. As we contemplate everything that Scripture says about him, you and I as believers in Christ, we can contemplate it like this, we can testify with John 1:29, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" And we say that with the fullest of assurance in our hearts and it's not just that he's taken away the sin of the world, he's taken away my sin. "All of my sins were laid on him at the cross," you say as a Christian. "I bear them no more. God will not hold me to account for them any longer. The barrier between me and God, the wall of separation has been broken down and I am reconciled to the holy God. My judge has become my King. My judge has become my Savior." These are wonderful truths and we didn't make them up. This is God's word to the world, that that's who his Son is.

Well, we've seen the content of God's testimony, let's just look briefly at our second and final point for this evening: the consequences of God's testimony. The consequences of God's testimony. The fact that this is God's testimony has important implications for the

way that we think about our salvation and I've already alluded to this but let's just walk through the remainder of the passage here ever so briefly. Subpoint A it's this, it's that salvation rests on certain testimony. Your salvation rests on certain testimony. It says elsewhere in Scripture, "We did not follow cleverly devised fables. We didn't make this up in our minds. This isn't something that you and I came up with. We didn't invent this. This is God's Son and this is God's testimony about His Son." Your faith is based on the certain testimony of God and that's what John wants you to understand. Verse 9,

9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. 10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

Now at a superficial level there at the start of verse 9, he's making this point that is made elsewhere in Scripture. We will believe men, we will believe human beings when they speak about matters of daily life. If the weather man makes a prediction, we're inclined to believe that that's what the weather's going to be like tomorrow. He's an earthly man speaking about earthly things and, you know, and we're not so skeptical that we just deny him as a liar. You know, if you ask me, "Did you see many people at the supermarket?" I'm making foolish simplistic illustrations here. I said, "Yes, I saw many people. I saw six wearing masks and the rest of them were not." You know what? You would believe me. You would be inclined to believe me based as I tell you these things. Well, look, John's point here is this, he says if you will believe men about such simple things, then you should believe God when He testifies to you about who His Son is. If you'll receive what men say about various things, understand that what God says is far greater. It's of an infinitely higher order and therefore the credence that you give, the willingness to believe men that you have is something that should be ascribed to God all the more. God has said and still says through his Spirit that Jesus Christ is God Incarnate and he is his beloved Son. God has said and testifies that this Jesus of whom we read in Scripture is the one and only Savior of the world. God has said that. It is established.

Well, then we are responsible to believe that and what that should do for you as a struggling believer in the midst of the doubts that bubble up in your heart, in the midst of your inconsistent life, God's testimony should drive doubt out of your heart and be replaced with a sense of belief, confidence, trust and assurance that based on what God has said you have believed in the real and one and only Savior of the world. This is what God has said about his Son and you ought to believe him, and as you believe him, your doubt is replaced with confidence.

Now the flip side of that is our second subpoint here, subpoint B, and this is one that we ought to emphasize more than we do perhaps. Subpoint B is this: denying Christ is a great sin. Denying Christ is a great sin. Unbelief is not an innocent doubt, it is a sin against God because to deny that Christ is God Incarnate, to say that someone else can be a savior or that Christ himself is not the Savior of the world, you must call God a liar in order to say that and that is a great great sin.

Look at verse 10 with me. There in the middle it says, "he one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son." You see, my friends, unbelief is morally culpable. It is a sin that brings guilt upon the one who denies the truth of Scripture. This is not a matter of a difference of opinion, this is a matter of seeing the testimony of God and saying, "I reject it," and calling the God of supreme truth, the God who is truth himself, calling him a liar because you do not believe what he says. And so we should not and we do not coddle unbelief, we do not accept doubt as of God's word as something that is innocent, it is a sin. John Stott said this and I quote, he said, "Unbelief is not a misfortune to be pitied, it is a sin to be deplored. It contradicts the word of the one true God and thus attributes falsehood to Him."

If you'll look over at the Gospel of John 3, I just want to point this out really quickly. It's been a while since I've called your attention to this text. John 3:19. We must understand that unbelief is morally culpable. It is a sin of great guilt. Verse 19,

19 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

He had just said in verse 18,

18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

So there is judgment attached to unbelief. James Montgomery Boice adds this, he says, "The real presumption is in questioning such assurances and thus casting doubt on God's word." You see, in our post-modern age, we tend to view unbelief with sympathy and say, "Oh, well, they're just struggling," or whatever the case may be. You and I have to understand that in God's eyes that unbelief is a sin and we have to call it as such. And you know, there's a whole realm of writing and teaching where people will stand before an audience and start talking about their doubts and, you know, all of their struggles and all of that, and that is not good. That is not from Christ. That is not from the Holy Spirit to get up and to cast doubt upon God's word like that. It may give you a sense of temporary connection with other unbelievers in your audience but it is a betrayal of the highest testimony that God has given to us about his Son. So if we have doubts, we need to come to God's word and find answers to them rather than proclaim them as though they were something of merit.

Well, finally as we look at God's testimony and the consequences of God's testimony, we see point C, subpoint C, that salvation is God's gift in Christ alone. Salvation is God's gift in Christ alone. The testimony of God leads us to this, what we find in verses 11 and 12.

11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

You know, in these confusing days, it's just so refreshing to find the clarity and the simplicity of Scripture. It says that God has given the testimony that we are to believe, that eternal life is available and it's available in his Son. The one who believes in his Son has this gift of eternal life. The one who rejects it, the one who does not have Christ, has made God a liar and does not have eternal life. And so we see that eternal life is a gift that God gives as we believe in his Son. This gift is found in Christ and it's a gift that brings a promise of a greater reward that we still have to enter into. Romans 6:23 says,

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

Well, my Christian friends, in these tumultuous days in which we seem to be living and it's only going to get more tumultuous as it leads up to the presidential election, we have this opportunity to take a breath of clean fresh air and gulp in fresh air from God's word while we have time, to understand that we who have believed in Christ, we have found the truth and we make no apologies for asserting that. We have the truth and every other religion does not and we say that and it is not presumptuous for us to say that, it is not arrogant for us to say that, we are simply testifying to what God himself has said in his word. The real presumption, my friends, the real arrogance is upon those who cast doubt upon Scripture, who cast doubt on Christ, who cast doubt on the reality of salvation, who deny it, who reject it. That is the height of presumption and arrogance, to hear God's testimony and reject it. How is it arrogant for us to simply say, "I believe what God has said"? That is the position of belief and humility and faith. It is the height of arrogance to say anything else because we believe these things and we have received them on the highest of testimony. And for those of you that are here apart from Christ, I commend this testimony to your heart. God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He calls you in a loving gracious appeal for you to believe in his Son that you might have this gift of eternal life, and I commend it to you as we close here this evening.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You for the clarity of Your testimony and we say individually and corporately we believe You. We accept Your testimony about Christ and we thank You for the gift of eternal life that is found in Him, and we thank You for the truth of Your word. We pray, Father, as the winds toss about outside our walls and even within the professing Christian church people are so confused about what the Gospel is, Father, we ask You for the grace that we might be true and stay faithful to Your word, and that You would bring many to a saving knowledge of Christ. Through the chaos that is around us, Father, may people find in the chaos the one true testimony that You have given to Your Son Jesus Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

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