



I was raised in a Christian home. My mom faithfully took us to our local church almost every Sunday. My grandmother attended the only Catholic church in town, so religion was around me my entire childhood. For a long time I was a bit naive and just thought everyone knew about God. My last year of junior high this radically changed. In the spring the news started rolling stories of a small town in Waco, Texas and what news anchors called “cult-like activity” taking place. I wasn’t exactly sure what cult-like activity meant but I was curious about the stories and would watch the news with my grandma daily.

After arriving home from school one afternoon the TV was flooded with stories about the Branch Davidians and their leader, David Koresh. That afternoon I watched as the home containing 54 adults and 28 children burned to the ground right before my eyes. I was in shock. How could something like this take place? Unfortunately it wasn’t my last experience as a teenager with a cult. A few years later the news ran a gruesome story of the Heaven’s Gate religious group in San Diego and the mass suicide of 39 members who claimed aliens on a passing comet would take them to a new place because the earth needed to be recycled. The TV gave me a glimpse into the harm a cult can cause, seeing the pain of loved ones wondering what they could have done to help their family member.

I share these extreme examples to remind us of the destructive nature of cult activity. The reality is most of us will never have to deal with a cult like that, but do we really know what we believe? For example, suppose someone comes to your door and says they believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior, but the more you talk to them it is clear that they don’t believe Jesus was actually God. How would you handle that? Would you be able to show them, from the Bible, that He is God?

One, Two, Three in Unity

As we’ve been studying 1 John we’ve seen John, on multiple occasions, encourage the believers to be assured of their decision to follow Jesus Christ. To further this assurance John writes to us about the testimony of Jesus.

This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement (1 John 5:6–8).

John tell us Jesus came by water and blood, and the Spirit testifies to this making an agreement with the three. The preposition “by” can also be translated “through,” so it’s best for us to think of the water and blood being the means by which Jesus came into the world to accomplish His plan of salvation. Many scholars have offered their thoughts on what the water and blood represent; I want to offer the best explanation I’ve found.

If Jesus came by or through water, the clearest explanation of water can be found at Jesus’ baptism. Prior to starting His public ministry Jesus went down to the Jordan river where His cousin John was baptizing. As Jesus approached the river John attempted to deter Jesus from His plan. In his mind, John thought Jesus should be the one who baptized him! Jesus clearly communicated to John that this is how it must be and John consented to baptizing Jesus (Matthew 3:16). Not only was this the beginning of His public ministry, it was also a divine witness to His authority; the voice of God and Holy Spirit descending on Him.

John makes it clear that Jesus came by water and blood. The blood can only represent the atoning blood of Christ shed on the cross at His crucifixion. Many are familiar with this story but let me give a quick reminder. Jesus was arrested late at night by a group of men who brought Him to an unsanctioned courtroom where He was unjustly convicted of false claims. The Jewish leaders did this out of jealousy. After being unjustly convicted Jesus was handed over to Pilate where He was sentenced to die on a cross. Prior to His crucifixion Jesus was beaten, bruised, whipped and bloodied and eventually nailed to a cross where a guiltless man would die next to two convicted criminals (Mark 15:25-26).

The water of Jesus’ baptism and His blood shed on the cross provide two examples to the nature of Jesus Christ. The false teachers in Ephesus were denying Jesus was the Son of God. Their new teaching distinguished between “Jesus” and “the Christ.” They not only taught, but insisted, Jesus was a mere man; the natural son of Mary and Joseph conceived in wedlock. Their teaching claimed the Spirit descended on Jesus at His baptism in order to equip Him for His ministry but the Spirit left Jesus at His crucifixion, leaving Him to die as an ordinary man. It was to refute this fundamental error that John, knowing Jesus was the Christ before His baptism and during His crucifixion, described Him as “the one who came through water and blood.”

Now John refers to the Spirit here who testifies to the truth of this matter. Do you remember the Spirit testified to Jesus' baptism at the Jordan by descending upon Him? We think here John is referring to the inward witness of the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to see the truth of Christ. Prior to His death and resurrection Jesus taught His disciples about the Holy Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit, and what to expect from the Holy Spirit. *"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me"* (John 15:26).

So, not only does the Spirit testify but we see: The Spirit, the water and the blood all testify to Jesus. And they testify in agreement with each other. The three testifying in agreement is an important fact, especially in Jewish culture since the testimony of two or three witnesses is a requirement (Deuteronomy 19:15). Did you see in verse 8 the order of the three; the order has shifted placing emphasis on the Spirit. The Spirit, the water and the blood are able to do what the false witnesses were unable to do in Jesus' unsanctioned courtroom.

Earlier I mentioned how Jesus was brought to an unsanctioned courtroom where He was unjustly convicted of false claims (Mark 14:55-56). In that unfair courtroom, in the middle of the night, false witnesses were brought in to aid in convicting Jesus of false crimes. Imagine this: prior to His arrest the false witnesses are debriefed on what they will say once Jesus arrives. Finally He's brought in and the false witnesses enter but they can't get their stories straight; giving further evidence Jesus should have never been sentenced to death. I love what John Stott says on this matter: "If the Son of God did not take to himself our nature in his birth and our sins in his death, he cannot reconcile us to God." Jesus chose to have His blood shed on the cross knowing it would reconcile us to Him, giving further testimony.

God's Testimony/Man's Testimony

John wants to assure believers of the deity of Christ by using these three witnesses we just looked at. It seems safe to say in our culture we tend to trust the testimony of others more than the truth of God.

We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son (verses 9–10).

It's true, we accept human testimony as truth but the testimony of God far surpasses any human testimony. Many of you don't even have to think twice about this statement and God's testimony, but John makes sure to convey the greater importance of God's testimony in comparison to man's testimony. Let me explain.

A few weeks ago we went to the Central Coast and visited Charity's parents. On Saturday morning we woke up early to visit a local farm; our daughter Sophie loves animals and we wanted to make the trip special for her. We got to pet goats, cows and sheep and had a chance to feed turkeys, a horse and a few llamas. As we were adventuring on the farm Sophie noticed some young chickens and wanted to hold them. I asked a worker if we could go into the cage and hold them; you think I'm crazy but you never know if you don't ask. He thought I was crazy too but told me there was a gray chicken on the other side of the farm who was friendly and would let her hold her.

Sophie and I immediately went on a chicken hunt and sure enough we caught the gray chicken! Sophie was in animal lovers' heaven posing for pictures and holding this chicken for about 15 minutes. Finally she let the chicken go and was following after it longing to hold it again. Now as she's chasing the chicken a different worker approached me warning me to not let Sophie hold this chicken because she thought it had chicken lice. This is the last thing you want to hear as a parent. Within a minute Sophie said: "My head itches, dad." Now I thought it was odd but maybe it was subconscious so I ignored her. Three more times she told me her head itched so finally we checked and guess what? She had chicken lice!

It took me a few times to listen to what my daughter was saying, but it was truth. John is explaining to us that since we take the testimony of others seriously, how much more should we take the testimony of God! The testimony of God is greater than any other testimony we have. The testimony God has given us is about His Son Jesus Christ and anyone who believes God accepts this testimony as truth. On the contrary whoever does not believe this testimony actually makes God out to be a liar by not accepting the testimony of His Son.

What John is moving toward here is the Spirit, the water and blood all testify to Christ and the reason they all agree is because God is behind them. It is God who testifies to His Son in history. It is God who communicated to the patriarchs and prophets in the Bible preparing them for the arrival of His Son. It is God who testified to His Son through the water and blood and it is God who testifies today, through the Spirit, in our hearts. God is the object of what John is writing about and Jesus is the subject; the visible evidence of this testimony.

In the beginning of verse 10 John explains to us: *"Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony."* The word "believe" is an important part of this text in the original Greek language. The word "believe" is in the present tense, and when the present tense is used the emphasis is always on the continuing nature of the action. We are not just to believe once when we become a Christian, but we are to keep on believing.

To believe in Christ is to commit yourself to Him as fully as you possibly can; faithfully relying on Him to meet all your needs, sustain your life, anticipating His second coming and one day to spend eternity with Him in heaven. From John's definition believing is much more than raising your hand to accept Christ one time in your life or attending church on a monthly basis. Believing is an every day, every hour, every minute occurrence of trusting Christ with your entire heart. "To believe" is John's favorite way to describe the saving power of Jesus Christ.

John doesn't only mention those who believe in the Son of God, he also mentions those who fail to believe in the Son of God. The contrast between believers and unbelievers is a stark contrast found in verse 10. Those who do not believe have made God out to be a liar. They may not be verbally abusive to God; slandering His name but their life speaks for itself. Think with me to a time in your life where someone made you out to be a liar. Maybe you were working on a team project in high school with a few close friends. At your first meeting on the project each person took a part to help the team accomplish the project. When it came time to compile the information and present your findings to the class a team member didn't complete their role and blamed the failing grade you received on you even though it wasn't your fault! Has there been a time in your marriage where your spouse blamed a financial failure on you even though it wasn't your fault, making you out to be a liar? The scenarios could go on and on; this could happen at work, in the courtroom, at Thanksgiving with the family, or with a close neighbor. Think about how you felt when someone made you out to be a liar. Imagine the pain God feels when people call Him a liar.

Jesus Christ: Life Giver

Everything John has written is about to culminate in the next two verses. We've learned about the Spirit, water and blood testifying in agreement to Jesus Christ being the only Son of God. We know the testimony of God is greater than any other testimony, and we've seen that whoever believes in the Son accepts this testimony. Are you wondering: "What is this testimony?"

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (verses 11–12).

The testimony simply put is this: Jesus Christ is a Life Giver.

This is the content of God's testimony. God has given men the thing they lack—eternal life. God bears witness through the Spirit, the water, and the blood that Jesus, the Son of God, is eternal life. If we believe God's witness, then we have this life within us. John understands the destructive nature of false teaching and is keenly aware eternal destinies are at stake here. We've seen through the entire letter John is obviously uninterested in debates with the gnostics about their special insight or

increased knowledge they claim to have. John's desire is to assure believers in their decision to follow Jesus. John knows eternal life is found only by believing in Jesus Christ and this isn't the first time John's preached this message.

Early in the book of Acts John and Peter were heading to the Temple in Jerusalem for a daily time of prayer and worship. While they were walking there was a crippled man begging on the roadside to the Temple. Peter looked the man in the eyes and told him to stand up in Jesus' name and be healed. Immediately the man stood up; jumping, leaping and praising God. A man who seconds earlier couldn't walk was now jumping and praising God. Obviously this created some commotion when the people of the city saw this man who was once lame now jumping around praising God in the Temple.

John and Peter seized the opportunity to address the crowd of onlookers and share about the saving truth of Jesus Christ—that Jesus is a life giver! John and Peter weren't the first ones to share this idea of Jesus being a life giver; Jesus Himself communicated this during His public ministry on multiple occasions. One of these records Jesus was teaching about was sheep and shepherds. He told the people the reason He came was so people could have life to full in His name (John 10:10). Another time Jesus was hanging out with His disciples, comforting them before He went to the cross. His disciple Thomas was confused about where Jesus was going and Jesus responded: "*I am the way, the truth and the life.*" (John 14:6).

As we talk about eternal life this morning there are three points I want to make sure we remember. The first is: Eternal Life is not a prize we can earn. The testimony from Jesus is eternal life. Eternal life isn't a prize we win at a carnival; John clearly writes it's something God has given us. The gift is priceless, something none of us deserve but God gave it anyway. There are certain religions who would disagree with this statement. Their false teachers claim that good works enable a person the right to enter heaven, teaching the only thing that matters is how you act. I'm not referring to religions in a far off country; I'm talking about religions in our backyard. Good works are not what give a person eternal life.

Secondly, Eternal Life is found only in Christ. Look at verse 12: "*Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*" We live in a time where false teaching is rampant; everyone is claiming they have the truth. It could be magnified because we live in a diverse area, in a free country where people are allowed to believe whatever they choose. Many people have chosen to believe in something other than Jesus Christ with the promise of Eternal Life. These religions have presented false gods with the hope of eternal life. Others' religions teach you must believe in Jesus plus this or plus that,

and you will have eternal life. Both of these ways of thinking are wrong.

Thirdly, Eternal Life is a present possession. We can receive and enjoy eternal life here today. You would be right in pushing back and asking something like: "If it's eternal life, how can I enjoy it today?" Since God has broken into eternity by sending His Son Jesus to earth we can only receive eternal life here on earth. Once we've accepted the free gift God has given it would be foolish of us to not enjoy it today. It would be like giving a 5-year-old a bike for Christmas and the child saying "I'm going to wait until I'm in high school to ride the bike." The parents bought the bike for their child to enjoy right now; if she waits until she's in high school it won't work. This is the same for us. God wants us to receive and enjoy the benefits of eternal life right now! The Westminster Shorter Catechism says this: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

Think about these three points we know: Eternal Life is not a prize we can earn. It's only found in Christ and it's present possession reminded me of summer. Now you may think that's odd and initially it is so let me tell you more. This summer I was invited to speak at our High School Ministry's Houseboat Summer Camp. We took almost 100 people to Lake Shasta, rented seven houseboats, brought up other boats and had four amazing days on the lake. We went tubing, wake boarding, swimming, fishing in the morning and ate amazing food; basically I was suffering for Jesus with students from all three of our campuses!

Every night we gathered students on the top of the boats for a time of worship and teaching. On our second night of houseboats I shared the Gospel message with students from all three

of our campuses. I shared about how God loves them, how Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, led a sinless life, died for our sins on the cross, and rose again in three days. When I was done preaching I invited students who had never made a personal decision to follow Christ to make that decision right there on the lake! That night we had a handful of students from our church trust in Jesus Christ as their personal savior! It was an awesome night.

I share that story because I opened my message explaining the destructive nature of false teaching and I want to end with the hope of right teaching. Will you think back to the time you were first introduced to Jesus Christ? Think about the truth you found in His name. Think about the freedom He brought to your life. Think about how your life has changed since meeting Jesus. I want you to remember the overwhelming joy you first experienced when you placed your trust in Christ. Your decision to follow Jesus as your personal savior means you have life. You can leave here this morning with complete confidence in your decision to follow Jesus; you have assurance you made the right decision. You have life!

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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