

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 5:31-47



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 5.31-47
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Introduction to *John 5.31-47*

The healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda becomes the occasion for Jesus to put all His cards on the table. Boldly, but graciously, He sets forth His claims and the promise that attends to believing in Him.

At the same time, Jesus challenged those who opposed Him, using their own authority against them, and presenting four strong witnesses to support His claims. He throws down the gauntlet at the feet of those who want to silence Him, as He puts Himself forward as the only hope of eternal life from God.

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1 Witness to Christ

Read and meditate on John 5.31, 32.

Jesus, anticipating some demand for credentials, presents various witnesses to support His claims. Back of all these witnesses is the Father Himself, as we shall see.

*³¹What I witness to is not
the truth, if I bear witness of Myself.*

*³²There is another witness, Someone else
who testifies of Me, and this I know:
His witness of Me is the truth.*

- John 5.31, 32

Reflect

1. The Law of God insisted that the truth of any claims had to be established by at least two witnesses (cf. Lev. 19.15). Jesus acknowledges that, by Himself, He is not sufficient to validate His claims. What is He saying here about the Law of Moses? Complete this prayer: *Lord Jesus, You submitted to the Law of God, and that means I...*

2. This matter of Jesus' relationship to the Law of God – the Law of Moses – is very important. From here, at the beginning of His ministry, to the very day of His death (cf. Jn. 20.7), the Jews will attack Jesus as a violator of God's Law. But, according to Matthew 5.17-19, how did Jesus describe His relationship to the Law? What did He mean by this? *Lord, You did not deny the Law of God, but fulfilled it. Help me today to...*

3. Jesus says there is "another" who bears witness to Him. In what follows, He will present *four* witnesses to validate His claim. Why do you suppose He didn't say "other witnesses" rather than "another"? *Lord, You have called me to be a witness to You as well. I want to fulfill this calling, so...*

4. In verse 32, Jesus uses "another" and "He" interchangeably. How does this help us in thinking about Who this "another" is? What did Jesus say about this witness? What does that mean? *Heavenly Father, whatever You witness to is true. Your Word is truth (Jn. 17.17), so I want my life to...*

5. Jesus summons the Father as His primary witness, and the Father will support His claims by offering a variety of evidence in the verses that follow. But Jesus' main point here is that the Father is true and bears true witness to Him. Is it possible for us to be as convinced as Jesus was about the Father being a true and reliable witness? To how much? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"No one who comes on the authority of another establishes that authority as his own but rather guards against such an understanding, for first must come the support of the one who gives him his authority. Now, [Christ] will not be acknowledged as Son if the Father never called him this. Nor will people believe he is the sent One if no sender gave him a commission." *Tertullian (155-250 AD)*

Jesus happily submits to the Law of God. Indeed, throughout the course of His public ministry, He will fulfill the Law of God, whole and entire. If Jesus had such high regard for the Law of God, what should our attitude toward it be?

Closing Prayer

Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”
“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”

Psalm 2.5-9

Psalm 2.4-8 (*Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

The Lord in heaven laughs in wrath
At all who embark on this cursèd path.
His angry Word to them is plain:
“Yet shall My King in Zion reign!”

Proclaim the message far and wide,
That God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son,
Who has for us salvation won!

2 The Witness of John

Read and meditate on John 5.33-35.

The Father's first witness to the truth of Christ's claims is John the Baptist. Jesus knew John was honored by the people of that day, and the Jews themselves understood that they should not repudiate John's testimony, precisely for that reason. But as great as John was, Jesus knew full well why he had been sent.

*³³Just so,
you sent to John, and he bore witness to
the truth. ³⁴And yet, men's testimony do
I not receive; these things I say to you
that you may all be saved. ³⁵He was a new
and burning, shining lamp, and in his light,
you for a time were willing to delight.*

- John 5.33-35

Reflect

1. Review the questions put to John the Baptist in John 1.19-21. What does this suggest about how the religious authorities viewed him? Why did they have such a high regard for John? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I want my witness to You to be as respected and credible as John's. Help me...*
2. John bore faithful witness to Jesus, but Jesus insists He does not need the testimony of men, even of such a one as John (v. 34). Does this mean Jesus does not need *our* testimony? And, if He does not *need* our testimony, why has He commissioned us, like John the Baptist, to *bear witness* to Him (Acts 1.8)? *Lord, I know that You don't need me. But You have called and commissioned me as Your witness. So...*
3. Apparently, the Jewish leaders' initial response to John was favorable (v. 35). In what sense was John "the burning and shining lamp"? With what did he glow, and what did he illuminate? *Lord, You have said that we are the light of the world. I want to be a burning and shining lamp for You, even today. Help me to...*
4. Jesus said they were willing "for a time to rejoice in his light." Why only "for a time"? What did they learn from John that caused him to lose favor with them? How does John's experience as a witness counsel us? *I know, Lord, that not everyone will receive my witness to You. Nevertheless...*
5. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were fine with John, as long as his work didn't conflict with their interests. They were happy for people to go out and be baptized unto repentance from sin. They began to be *not* happy with John, first, as he confronted them with their true nature (cf. Lk. 3.7-20; Matt. 3.7-12), and then as he pointed them to Jesus as the Lamb of God. John's witness was faithful and true. He was a man sent by God (Jn. 1.6). In what sense, and for what purpose, have *we* been sent by God (Jn. 20.21)? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"What Jesus says is like this: I, being God, did not need the witness of John, which is a human witness. And yet, because you listened to him and believe that he is more trustworthy than anyone else, and because you ran to him as to a prophet (for 'all the city came out to the Jordan') and, finally, because you have not believed on me even when I performed miracles, therefore I remind you of that witness of his." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

It pleases the Lord to use human witnesses to validate His claim. He does not need us, but it pleases Him to use us. How should we prepare for such a high and holy calling?

Closing Prayer

O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
Let them be confounded *and* consumed
Who are adversaries of my life;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor
Who seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.

Psalm 71.12-16

Psalm 71.12-16, 3 (*Solid Rock: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*)

O God, be not too far from me; my ever-present Helper be!
Consume and shame my enemies; let them reproached and humbled be.
A Rock of habitation be, command Your Word to rescue me:
My Rock and Fortress ever be!

But as for me, my voice I raise to sing in hope and constant praise!
With saving grace my voice will swell Your never-ending grace to tell.
A Rock of habitation be, command Your Word to rescue me:
My Rock and Fortress ever be!

3 The Witness of Works

Read and meditate on John 5.36-38.

John bore witness to Jesus, and so did the works Jesus performed. Here he referenced the cleansing of the temple and the healing of the lame man, as well as the work of proclaiming the Lord's salvation. These were different works, but they point to the same conclusion about Jesus.

³⁶But I a greater witness have than John: the works the Father gave, and I have done, bear witness of Me, that I have been sent by Him. ³⁷The Father, He Himself Who sent Me, He has testified of Me. But you have neither heard His voice at all, nor do you see His form. ³⁸His Word does not abide in you at all, because you have denied the One He sent, and in Him you do not believe.

- John 5.36-38

Reflect

1. What can we learn from Jesus' ministry about the role of works in the salvation of the Lord? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I know I have not been saved by my works, but my works still matter because...*
2. Jesus insisted that He had come to do works appointed to Him by the Father. He would only do what the Father showed Him, so all the works He did reveal something about the Father's will. What do we learn about the will of God from the works Jesus has done to this point? *Lord, my works also say something about You and Your will. Today, let my works say...*
3. Jesus also mentions that the Father had testified of Him (cf. Jn. 1.32, 33; Matt. 3.16, 17; Ps. 2.6-9). Jesus implies that the Old Testament bore witness to Him, through the voice of the Father, which many heard at His baptism. Does this suggest to us any ideas about how we ought to read the Old Testament? Explain. *Teach me all Your Word, Lord, and let me see Jesus everywhere, so that...*
4. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, and doubtless many of the people, knew a great deal about the Bible. But Jesus said that they had not "at any time" heard the voice of God, nor seen Him, and that they did not have the Word of God abiding in them. How is it possible to know the Bible, and yet not know God, or have His Word abiding in us? What is necessary, according to Jesus, to begin receiving God's Word as He intends? *Lord, I know that knowing Scripture is not enough. You want me to...*
5. Every word out of Jesus' mouth was like poking these religious people in the eye. They turned away from the righteous John the Baptist. They failed to see the will of God in Jesus' works. They knew their Bibles, but they didn't know God. Here is Jesus at His unsettling best. Why was He so aggressive with these people? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"It was not even in their power to assert what they boasted the most about, that is, that they had received and obeyed God's commands. Therefore he adds, 'You do not have his word abiding in you,' that is, the commandments, the Law and the Prophets. Although God instituted them, you do not have them. For if the Scriptures everywhere tell you to believe in me and you still do not believe, it is clear that his word has departed from you. 'For you do not believe him whom he has sent.'" *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

There's always a danger for students of Scripture that we learn the Bible well, but miss the Bible's main point. Throughout the Scripture, Jesus is revealed, so that, as we learn and follow Him, He may show us the Father. But if our reading and study of Scripture falls short of seeing and loving Jesus, then we've missed the point. How do you approach reading and studying the Bible? Is it to see Jesus, as God is revealing Him in every part?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.
Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!

Psalm 34.1-8

Psalm 34.1-9, 3 (*Alleluia [Lowe]: Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I sought the Lord, He answered, and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.
'Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide.
None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e'er confide.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

4 The Witness of Scripture

Read and meditate on John 5.39, 40.

Jesus makes the boldest statement yet concerning His deity, as He explains that the whole of divine revelation is about Him.

*³⁹You search the Scriptures, for you thought
in them eternal life for you might be;
and these are they which testify of Me.
⁴⁰But you remain unwilling to believe
in Me, and thus do not true life receive.*

- John 5.39, 40

Reflect

1. The religious leaders of Jesus' day searched the Scriptures and came up with exhausting lists of things to do and not to do, which they encoded in traditions. What's wrong with that? What were they thinking about how best to gain eternal life? Complete this prayer: *Lord, don't let me miss the central teaching of Your Word. Help me always to...*
2. Jesus is not condemning searching the Scriptures. What *is* He condemning? How can we guard ourselves against falling into that trap? *You are the theme of the Word, O Lord Jesus, for You are the very Word of God. As I read and study, help me to know You better. That is, help me...*
3. Is Jesus right? Do *all* the Scriptures testify of Him? Suppose you were challenged to show one example each in the Law of Moses, the histories, the sacred writings, and the prophets that speaks about Jesus. What would you cite? *Show Yourself to me, Lord, in all Your Word! As I read and study my Bible each day...*
4. Of course, if people just don't *want* to see Jesus in the Scriptures, then they won't. They'll see what they want, and miss Jesus. And what else will they miss (v. 40)? Why does this make it so important that we use the Word of God in our witness for Jesus? *Help me to prepare each day, O Lord, to carry out my witness for You. Give me Scripture to use when...*
5. We can only imagine the astonishment with which the religious leaders must have received these words from Jesus. Imagine me saying, "You've read all the plays and poetry of Shakespeare, and I tell you, it's all about me." Jesus' claim goes far beyond that. What would His claim say about the use *they* had been making of Scripture? Do we just sometimes need to tell people they're wrong? Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"He tells them not to simply 'read the Scriptures' but 'search the Scriptures.' ... These sayings were not on the surface or out in the open but were hidden very deep like some treasure. Anyone who searches for hidden things, unless they are careful and diligent, will never find the object of their search. This is why he says ... , 'For in them you think you have eternal life,' meaning that they did not reap much fruit from the Scriptures, thinking, as they did, that they should be saved by the mere reading of them, without faith.... And so, it was with good reason that he said 'you think,' because they did not actually listen to what the Scripture had to say but merely prided themselves on the bare reading." *John Chrysostom (344-407AD)*

Read your Bible. Study and meditate on it thoroughly. Wait before the text of Scripture until Jesus begins to emerge from wherever you're reading. Then you'll be ready to think about how to apply Him to your life. Is this what Paul has in mind when he says we should "learn" Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24)? Explain.

Closing Prayer

The fool hath said in his heart,
There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,
there is none that doeth good.
The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.
They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy:
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and call not upon the LORD.
There were they in great fear:
for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.

Psalm 14.1-5

Psalm 14.4, 5 (*St. Anne: O God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

None understands, none seeks the Lord; they all have turned aside.
Deception leads them from God's Word who have His grace denied.

The workers of iniquity consume God's sheep like bread;
They trust not in the Lord, and He shall fill their hearts with dread.

5 The Honor of Christ

Read and meditate on John 5.41-44.

By now, it would have been clear that the people to whom Jesus was speaking were becoming upset (He was good at upsetting things, as we've seen). We can imagine the murmuring, the whispering, the scornful looks. There was no way these people were going to honor what He was saying. But that did not discourage Jesus.

⁴¹No honor do I have from men. ⁴²But you I know, and what I know is that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³I come to you in God the Father's Name, for from Him I was sent, and you do not believe in Me. But you another will receive, who comes in his own name. ⁴⁴But how can you believe, when all the honor you want to receive is that which comes from men, and not that honor which can come to you from God?

- John 5.41-44

Reflect

1. What did Jesus mean by "honor from men"? How do people seek such honor in our day? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I want people to love You. But I can't guarantee they'll always love me. Help me to be careful always to...*
2. Jesus says that seeking honor from men can be a hindrance to believing in Him (v. 44). Why is this so? Can you think of any ways this happens in local churches? *Guard and protect me, Lord, from seeking honor from men. Let me always...*
3. Jesus mentions those who come in their own name, seeking honor from others. He might have been referring to what today might be called a "personality cult." We see such things even in the Christian movement, where people become enamored with a favorite speaker, preacher, or writer, and then insist he or she is the last word on just about everything. How can searching the Scriptures as Jesus recommends help us to avoid this pitfall? *Lord, if I'm only ever seeking to find and know You, I won't...*
4. What is involved in seeking the honor that "comes only from God"? What is that honor? What can we do to seek it? How can we know if we have attained it? *Lord, I want to bring honor and glory to You in all my ways. Honor my desire to honor You, Lord, by...*
5. Jesus indicates there are only two kinds of people: those who seek honor from men, and those who seek the honor that comes from God. Is that too simplistic? How would you counsel a new believer always to make sure he was only ever seeking honor from God? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"He accuses the Pharisees of a love for power and of prizing honors from people. He is covertly hinting that it is exceedingly inadvisable to put the diseases of their own soul on God, who can by no means have anything to do with disease. He goes on to say that they, held fast by an empty kind of glory, thereby lose the fairest prize, meaning faith in him. Paul speaks clearly of this too when he says, 'For if I were yet pleasing people, I should not be Christ's servant.' It is almost always necessarily the case that those who hunt for honors from people fail when it comes to the glory that comes from above and from the only God." *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

We always need to be on guard against the tendency to want others to honor us – to acknowledge our sincere faith, be impressed by our good works, boast about our ministries, and so forth. To delight in such honors is a sure sign that unbelief is creeping into our lives. We cannot honor God, or be honored by Him, as long as we seek the honor of men. What might be some signs that we were beginning to drift in this direction?

Closing Prayer

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.
Your throne *is* established from of old;
You *are* from everlasting.
The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves.
The LORD on high *is* mightier
Than the noise of many waters,
Than the mighty waves of the sea.
Your testimonies are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house,
O LORD, forever.

Psalm 93

Psalm 93 (*Trinity: Come, Thou Almighty King*)

The Lord in majesty reigns, girded and clothed in strength!
Earth stands secure: Nor shall it e'er be moved;
God on His throne above set it in place with love –
His reign is sure!

What, though the floods arise, raising their voice to the skies,
Strong though they be, God on His holy throne
Drowns out their fearsome drone, hasting to save His own,
Eternally.

Almighty God on high, Your Word can never lie!
Your truth is sure – holy and just are they
Who tread Your holy way; Yours shall they ever stay
Lord, evermore.

6 Moses Their Judge

Read and meditate on John 5.45-47.

Jesus says that Moses wrote about Him. That doesn't mean that Moses *knew* He was writing about Jesus, just that the Spirit, Who inspired Moses' writing, used him to point the people forward to the coming of Jesus, so they would recognize Him when He finally appeared.

⁴⁵And do not think that I accuse you to the Father. Moses, whom you trust, is who condemns you. ⁴⁶If in him you had believed, then, since He wrote of Me, you would receive Me. ⁴⁷But if Moses writings you will not believe, nor will you hear what I have taught."

- John 5.45-47

Reflect

1. Jesus said that the religious leaders of His day trusted in Moses. In what sense was that true? What were they trusting Moses *for*? Why was this wrong, and how does this counsel us when it comes to our own study of God's Word? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, I am Your servant, according to Your Word. Let me not try to make Your Word my servant. Instead...*

2. According to Jesus, the Law of Moses *accused* the religious leaders of His day. The Greek word for *accuse* has the root of "categorize" in it. Read Psalm 1. In what sense does the Law of God "categorize" people? *Lord, I want Your Law, and all Your Word, to categorize me as...*

3. Paul sheds some light on how the Law *accuses* us. Meditate on Romans 7.7-12. Is this a valid function for the Law of God? Why do we need this kind of "categorizing" in the Christian movement? *Your Law, O Lord, is holy and righteous and good. It also reveals sin, and kills all boasting about righteousness. Let Your Law be at work in me, O Lord, to...*

4. Moses gave the Law of God to the people of Israel. Jesus says, "if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me." Should the Law of God have a place in our witness for Christ? Explain. *I need to know Your Law better, Lord, so help me...*

5. Jesus saw great value in the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses is the acorn to the oak of divine revelation in Scripture. It teaches about Jesus. It accuses sinners and identifies the righteous. Jesus submitted to and fulfilled the Law of God. What should be your attitude toward and approach to the Law? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed from questions 1-4.

Summary

"See how he takes away all of their excuses: ... You maintain that you believe in Moses in what you dare to do against me, he says. I, on the contrary, show that this is the worst kind of misbelief in Moses you can think of. I am so far from opposing that law that he who shall accuse you is none other than the man who gave you the law. In other words, he says now of Moses what he had said of the Scriptures above, 'In them you think you have eternal life.' And so here he speaks of Moses as someone 'in whom you trust.' Jesus is always answering them from their own authorities." *John Chrysostom (344-407AD)*

The religious leaders wanted to accuse Jesus of breaking God's Law by appealing to their traditions to condemn His practice. Jesus insisted they had misread Moses in establishing such traditions, and should instead have discovered Him in their reading. He took their claim to Mosaic authority and turned it upside-

down on their heads, and made their foremost authority their ultimate accuser. Do you suppose doing this endeared Jesus to these people? Why not? What lesson is there in this for us?

Closing Prayer

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;
The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
More to be desired *are they* than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them *there* is great reward.
Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse me from secret *faults*.
Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;
Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalm 19.7-14

Psalm 19.7-14 (*St. Christopher: Beneath the Cross of Jesus*)

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
The simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.
His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.
O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;
Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!
Let evil rule not in my soul, that I may blameless be.
O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight,
Be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

7 Witnesses to Christ

Read and meditate on John 5.31-47.

By the end of John 5, Jesus has put all the cards on the table – all His claims, purpose, promise, and authority – and He has called powerful and convincing witnesses to validate His claims.

³¹What I witness to is not the truth, if I bear witness of Myself. ³²There is another witness, Someone else who testifies of Me, and this I know: His witness of Me is the truth. ³³Just so, you sent to John, and he bore witness to the truth. ³⁴And yet, men's testimony do I not receive; these things I say to you that you may all be saved. ³⁵He was a new and burning, shining lamp, and in his light, you for a time were willing to delight. ³⁶But I a greater witness have than John: the works the Father gave, and I have done, bear witness of Me, that I have been sent by Him. ³⁷The Father, He Himself Who sent Me, He has testified of Me. But you have neither heard His voice at all, nor do you see His form. ³⁸His Word does not abide in you at all, because you have denied the One He sent, and in Him you do not believe. ³⁹You search the Scriptures, for you thought in them eternal life for you might be; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰But you remain unwilling to believe in Me, and thus do not true life receive. ⁴¹No honor do I have from men. ⁴²But you I know, and what I know is that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³I come to you in God the Father's Name, for from Him I was sent, and you do not believe in Me. But you another will receive, who comes in his own name. ⁴⁴But how can you believe, when all the honor you want to receive is that which comes from men, and not that honor which can come to you from God? ⁴⁵And do not think that I accuse you to the Father. Moses, whom you trust, is who condemns you. ⁴⁶If in him you had believed, then, since He wrote of Me, you would receive Me. ⁴⁷But if Moses writings you will not believe, nor will you hear what I have taught."

- John 5.31-47

Reflect

1. Summarize the claims Jesus makes about Himself in this and the previous chapters of John's gospel. Cite some other passages of Scripture to support those claims. Complete this prayer: *Lord, as I go to be Your witness, I need to make sure I tell others Who You are. As I prepare for today's witnessing opportunities...*
2. From what we've seen to this point in John 5, how would you describe Jesus' purpose? Why did He come to earth? What was He doing, and why? *You have sent me, Lord, in the same way You were sent (Jn. 20.21). Today, that will mean that I...*
3. Summarize the *promise* Jesus held out to those who heard Him. How would you share that promise with someone in your Personal Mission Field? What words would you use to make the promise intelligible and appealing? *Help me, Lord, to understand Your promise, and the desires and aspirations of the people to whom You send me each day, so that I...*
4. To what authorities (or witnesses) has Jesus appealed in order to validate His claims, purpose, and promises? Is it important that we be clear about the authority we look to when we share the Good News of Jesus with others? Is it important that we help them examine the authorities undergirding their own worldview? Explain. *I trust in You and Your Word, Lord! Help me to rely on Your authority not only for my witness, but for...*
5. Put yourself back into the Jerusalem and Judea of John 1-5. What's the "buzz" going around about Jesus? How are people responding? What kind of "mood" is in the air? Compare this with how people think about Jesus in our day. What's the difference? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"Someone might say, 'What do you have to do with Moses when you broke the very sabbath that he ordained we should keep? How then does Moses accuse us? And why should we believe on someone else who comes in his own name? All these assertions you make have no evidence to back them up.' Now in truth all these points are proved above. 'For,' [Christ would reply] 'since it is acknowledged that I came from God by my works, by the voice of John and the testimony of the Father, it is certain that Moses too would condemn you.' For Moses had said that if any one shall come doing miracles, leading people to God and foretelling the future with certainty, you must obey him. Now Christ had done all this." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

What are you learning so far in the Gospel of John about your calling to be a witness for Christ? How do you prepare each day to carry out that calling?

Closing Prayer

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the assembly of saints.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Let them praise His name with the dance;

Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.

For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

He will beautify the humble with salvation.

Let the saints be joyful in glory;

Let them sing aloud on their beds.

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,

And a two-edged sword in their hand...

Psalm 149.1-6

Psalm 149 (*Toulon: I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art*)

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new!
Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!
Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him
Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre!
To be so praised is God's one great desire.
Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace;
Show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight!
Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!
Sing praise and take His Word into your hand;
Publish His grace and wrath in every land!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why did Jesus challenge the religious leaders' "trust" in Moses? Should we challenge what people trust in today? Explain.
2. Jesus pointed to witnesses to support His claim. If asked to do so, could you do the same? Where would you turn, and what witnesses would you put forward to support the claims Jesus makes about Himself?
3. What was Jesus' purpose in being sent by the Father? This is also His purpose in sending us to the world (Jn. 20.21). How should we expect to see that purpose working out in our lives?
4. Jesus upset things and people in the process of telling them the truth. While we need to always speak the truth in love, should we expect our witness for Christ to be upsetting to some? Why? Should this keep us from bearing witness to Him? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 5.31-47? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

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Thank you.