

Testify

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[0:00] Turn on my microphone there. Wow, it's a joy to see you.

And different folks are away. I'm thinking Pastor John is on a run to get pizza today.! Good for him. So hang around afterwards. We're going to decorate for VBS.

And we're going to eat pizza. So that'll be good. And, well, today we are continuing with our study of the book of John. I was looking at it this week and realizing, oh, we're probably about three-fourths of the way through the book of John.

And I think we'll finish it up sometime in October. So it's been a great year to study this marvelous gospel. Today we're going to be looking in John 15, the latter part of John 15, toward the end of it. And let's begin with prayer. Lord, we praise you today. We have been singing your praises. We've, many of us, as you have provided, have given offerings in faith and out of gratitude.

[1:10] We've enjoyed your presence, the presence of your people. But, Lord, I know this. These people don't need to come and hear what I've got to say. They need a word from heaven.

They need a fresh touch, Lord. We all need to hear from you. So we're praying together that you open our ears to hear the Holy Spirit speak to us through your word.

Challenge our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, in the book of John, we're doing the last, I don't know, eight or ten verses. But I want to start with just the very last two.

And what do you know? I was fooling around with this computer this morning after I got here, and I accidentally have erased and deleted the second slide.

So you turn in your Bible to chapter 15 of John, and we're going to look at verse 26 and 27 right at the very end.

[2:09] John 15, 26 and 27. You got it? All right. I'm going to be reading this. I think this is probably the new international version.

I'm not for sure. So it begins, when the advocate. Now, in some translations, it says when the helper. In some, it says when the counselor. But John 15, 26.

When the advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father. Jesus is speaking. Jesus says, I'm going to send him. He is the spirit of truth who goes out from the Father.

He will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. So we have this promise that the advocate.

Who do we, what name do we normally call this advocate? We're talking about the Holy Spirit. The spirit of truth, sometimes called the spirit of Christ. The spirit of God.

[3:12] He will come. And among the many things that we, Jesus has been saying that he will do. How he will comfort us. And he will remind us of all things. In these last few chapters, he's been telling us these things the spirit will do.

This time he's telling us the spirit's going to testify. And I'm going to look just ahead a little bit. And we're going to look into the next chapter, just verse 8.

It tells some of the things the Holy Spirit will do. Now that's interesting.

Sometimes we think when we witness or when we testify that we have to somehow convince somebody they're a sinner. Or that we have to convince them that God is righteous.

Or that we have to convince them that judgment is coming. Now we can say those things to them. But it's the Holy Spirit's job.

[4:17] He's the only one who can convict people. And therefore, he testifies about Jesus. More effectively, without him, we cannot really testify.

So then, what is our part to do? Well, it was right there at the very end of that. John 15 and verse 27, he says, You also must testify.

You have been with me from the beginning. Well, he was obviously talking to his original disciples. And they had been with him from the beginning of his ministry.

And he's saying, tomorrow I'm going to die. I'm going to be gone. I'm going to be resurrected. But now you've got a job. You've been with me. You will testify.

You will tell people what you have learned from me. It will be your job. But I think it's also clear that he's talking to us. The reason the scriptures come to us is he's saying, you must testify.

[5:17] And after all, you've been with him since the time you were born again. The disciples were only with him three years. Some of you have been walking with the Lord 30, 40, 50, and more years.

You've been walking with the Lord. And so you can now testify what the Lord has done for you. Now, we get scared to death. We say, oh, my goodness. You don't know.

I cannot witness to anybody. I can't witness because I don't know the Bible well enough. I don't really know what to say. I can't testify. What if they don't receive it?

What if I offend them? What if they ask me a question and I don't know how to answer that question? I don't dare. You know, and we have all these reasons. But let's just look at what this word testify means.

First of all, it is an action verb. And it does have to do with speaking. And so it is true that your greatest testimony is how you live.

[6:15] That is true. But there are times when you have to speak for the Lord. And so to testify is to intentionally be speaking for the Lord. Now, all you're doing is witnessing.

And you say, yeah, that's the part I'm scared of. It's because we in the church, I think, have developed a wrong definition of witnessing. What does a witness do in a court?

They only tell what they know and what they saw. So that's a hypothetical case. A guy has been in some kind of an accident.

And he's claiming that another fellow ran a red light and smashed into his car. And the other fellow says it's not true. And it's gone to court. And there just happens that there was a witness right there on the sidewalk.

So they put the witness on the stand. And they say, what did you see? He says, well, I saw a yellow Dodge Charger go through a red light and smash into a green pickup truck.

[7:22] He's just telling what he saw personally. And then he might get cross-examined. They might say, what color did you say that car was?

Yellow. Are you sure? Yeah. Was it the car that belongs to that guy? I don't know. I didn't see inside the car. I don't know if it was his or not. Did he hit the green pickup truck that belongs to that guy?

I don't know. I didn't see who was in the pickup truck. Are you sure it was a red light? Oh, yeah. From where I was standing, it was a red light because I was also waiting to cross the street.

And the light hadn't changed yet. And this guy just came cruising through and smashed into that truck. And that's all I know. Now, is it the witness's job to convince the jury of anything?

No. He doesn't have to persuade anybody of anything. He just tells what he or she saw. That's all they do.

[8:22] And so, when you speak for the Lord, you don't have to know the whole Bible. You don't have to persuade anybody. The guys in the court that are lawyers, it's their job to persuade the jury.

And the Holy Spirit's job, he's like, in fact, another word for advocate is a lawyer. He's the one who's convicting and persuading. And you're just saying what you know.

And so, we've kind of made this thing a lot harder, this idea of witnessing than the Lord ever meant for it to be. And some people say, well, I just don't know the Bible well enough.

Did you know it well enough to receive Christ? What part did you know? Whatever it was that led you to Christ, share that part.

And if they say, where is that in the Bible? Or if they say, what is the end times going to be like? What are the seven bowls in the book of Revelation? And who? If they say, how could God be a father and a son and a Holy Spirit?

[9:32] When they ask you the things that you don't know, here's the best answer in the world. I don't know. That's easy to say. You know, you didn't have to memorize a speech.

You didn't have to memorize a whole bunch of scriptures. Now, when I was a young believer, that's really the approach that we tried to do. But it always felt so kind of fake, like I was selling something.

And so I'm glad that at some point I began to realize, no, no, no. I'll just tell people what I know about Jesus. Why did I decide to follow him?

How has he touched my life? And anything they ask me, I don't know. I just say, I don't know. If they say, do you believe that Billy Graham will be, you know, whatever?

And I'll say, I don't know. That's between Billy Graham and God. I don't have to be able to argue all kinds of points and win debates. A witness tells what the Lord has done.

[10:33] And so you can say, well, there was a time when we were needed whatever it was. We were, I don't know, we were sick or we didn't have food or I was about to lose my job or whatever.

And the Lord helped us and rescued us. That can be your witness. That's what you know firsthand. And so you share what the Lord has done for you.

And so often we just think, well, I don't know what to say. Tell them your experience of the Lord Jesus. Now, I will say this. Some people, the scripture says, God has called some to be evangelists.

And there are the Billy Grahams of the world. And in most churches, God has put at least one or two folks who are very gifted in evangelism, meaning they are very gifted at telling others about the faith.

And God has given them that gift. And the Holy Spirit works through them in a special way. You don't have to be the next Billy Graham. You just have to be who you are and share what you know.

[11:41] And those people who are evangelists, they have more success at leading people to Christ. That's their calling. That's their gift.

But all of us are supposed to do what this scripture says. You also must testify. Must makes it an imperative.

It's a command. Again, if you're a follower of Jesus, when he gives you the chance, you will tell people what Jesus has done for you. Now, what's going to happen when you do that?

Well, I've been thinking about it. I think there's just a few options of what could happen. One, and this is the best one of all. You tell somebody about the Lord Jesus, and they really listen.

And the Holy Spirit works. And they receive him as their Savior. Hallelujah. That's the best one. And many of us have been blessed to have had that opportunity a few times, that we've led someone to Christ.

[12:46] What a blessing. But, frankly, that probably doesn't happen most of the time. It happens more if you really have that gift of evangelism.

But this is another thing that could happen. Sometimes they might just listen and say something like, well, that's nice. And then they just forget all about it. That's the ones that Jesus said, you scatter the seed.

And the birds came and ate the seed. And I've had that experience. You have, too. I remember a guy. We're still friends. I still, Lord, remind me to pray for him.

I started to say I pray for him. I forget to pray for him. But I worked with him for years. And every now and then I run into him. We've been friends for at least 30 years. And on one occasion, I forget how it came up, but I was able to share with him what I knew about the Lord and how the Lord had saved me and what he had done for me.

And, you know, just being a witness. And I remember when I got through and he listened. And when I got through and he said, well, you know, I'm glad that works for you. That's really nice.

[13:51] And he went on about his business unaffected. Well, I did my part. Here's something else that might happen. They might listen and a seed will be planted or a seed that their mama or their grandma or some Sunday school teacher.

They were in vacation Bible school when they were eight years old. That seed's there. And when you share that witness, you're putting water on it. And, boy, we've all had that experience.

I've shared this with you all before, but I'll tell it again. This is part of who led me to Christ. There were a lot of factors at work. I did not want to be a Christian.

I was telling people proudly that I was an atheist. I was a college graduate. I had a master's degree. I knew better than that religious superstition. And I was working at the Mental Health Center in Raleigh.

And I had only been there a month or two. And we were doing therapy. I've told you before, I needed therapy. I was one messed up dude. But I was counseling and doing therapy with people.

[15:02] So one day we were in the break room. I don't remember everybody that was there, but this one young lady, six or eight years older than me. I mean, she was old.

She was in her 30s. Girl was old. Anyway, we all really had a lot of respect for her. She obviously was a good counselor. She had that reputation.

And she's just sitting there. Maybe we're all drinking a cup of coffee in the break room. And this guy, one of the other counselors, who's also an older guy, he comes walking in. He might have been as old as 40.

You know, we're talking old. He comes walking in. And he says, he sits down and he goes, man, I'm glad that session's over with. I got one of those religious fanatics.

Y'all know the type. All he wanted to talk about was, I'm going to pray about this. And Jesus is going to help me. And am I saved? And man, I hate to work with those kind.

[15:57] And I'm thinking, I'm with you, buddy. I hate to work with those kind. And this girl, her name was Linda. I have no idea where she is today.

She just very calmly spoke up and said, yeah, I used to feel that way too. And then I met Jesus and made peace with God.

And now those people don't bother me. And then she said, ah, time for my next appointment. She got up and walked out. That's all she said.

It hit me like a freight train. That one little sentence. It was amazing. The seed was there trying to break through.

And she poured some water on that hard ground. And before the month was over, I came to Christ. So you never know.

[16:58] And who knows what happened to the guy that came in griping. For all I know, he might be a believer today. And she was not one of those. She didn't wear, would have been okay if she had. She didn't wear the Jesus T-shirts and hand out tracts at work or anything.

Some people do. Praise the Lord for that. She just testified when she had the opportunity in a very simple way. And it had a powerful effect.

Well, here's another thing that might happen. Sometimes people just don't want to listen and they'll tell you so. I've had that happen before. Especially right after I became a believer.

I went around visiting my old buddies that I would hang out with. And I remember one of them in particular. I said, well, Ken, I don't know if you heard or not, but I'm a Christian now.

I'm following Jesus. And I remember he said, yeah, I heard about it. And I don't want to hear any more about it. I said, really? Don't you want me to tell you? No, I don't want to hear about it. If that's what you want to talk about, please leave.

[18:00] And I just found out at my mother's funeral a really interesting situation like this. One of my nephews married a girl who was not a believer.

Now, in my mother and father's family and among their descendants, that doesn't happen much. We are a people of faith. But he married a girl who was not a believer, had not grown up in church. But she was willing to go to church with him. She would go and listen. You know, the Lord was working. Well, no one knew it. And I guess it's been about a year, a year and a half ago.

She came home one day and told her husband that she had been at lunch with some of her girlfriends. And one of them said, you know, I am so tired of these Christian women.

These Christian women on social media, Facebook, and all they're doing is preaching and praying and saying, I'm just tired of them. And she said, so I just felt like I had to speak up.

[19:08] So she said to her husband, I spoke up and I said, well, I think maybe I'm a Christian woman. I believe in Jesus. I believe he died for my sins.

I believe he rose again. He's coming back one day. I think I'm a Christian woman. And her friend said, then I don't belong with this group anymore.

And got up and left. Well, the family on the one hand was rejoicing because the niece, the niece, not Denise.

The niece had for the first time confessed that she was a believer. It was like she wasn't even sure. And it had come to her. I have become a believer. And she, you know, that was her witness, her testimony.

But now, I just found out yesterday, I called my brother and it's his daughter-in-law. And he was at their house. And we're just talking a little bit.

[20:11] I'm just checking up on him, you know, since mama died. How you doing? And he says, well, we're up here because she's getting ready. I knew she was pregnant. They're getting ready to have a shower.

And I said, you know, tomorrow I'm going to tell a story about her, about that girl that got up and walked out. He says, oh, let me tell you the end of the story. About three months ago, she called her.

That girl called Denise and said, can we get together? And they got together. And she said, I want to apologize to you. I was wrong. And I'd like to be friends again.

And he says, and you won't believe it. Today, she's the one who is hosting this baby shower for her. Now, can it be long before she comes to Christ, this woman who did not want to hear about it? Sometimes when you think they don't want to listen, seed is still being planted and being watered. And it can take time. You don't know how long it'll take.

[21:16] Well, then, I guess from our perspective, the worst thing that can happen is that they will try to persecute you. Well, why in the world would they try to persecute you?

Because this is what Jesus said. We're in the same chapter we're studying today, John 15, backing up some. Jesus told his friends the last night he was with them, if the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

If you belong to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.

That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

So, really, we should not be surprised. Jesus even said, don't be surprised. He said, rejoice. Here's where he said that back in Matthew chapter 5.

[22:21] He says, blessed are you when people insult you, really? When they persecute you? When they falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Jesus?

Not because you've been a jerk. Not because you've been a bad worker. Not because you've taken advantage of them. No. But because of your faith in Christ. They are insulting you or persecuting you or lying about you.

Then Jesus said, if that happens, rejoice and be glad. Great is your reward in heaven. Really? Rejoice? In Acts chapter 5, when those disciples got arrested for the first time and got beaten for the first time, it says, when they left, they went out rejoicing that they had been beaten for the name of Jesus.

Wow. That is such a strange thought for those of us living in America today, the land of the free and the brave, where we have freedom of speech.

The truth is, for most of us, we haven't suffered much persecution. Here's about the worst. This isn't even persecution.

[23:34] We get upset because Target won't let the employees say Merry Christmas. And we go, ah, we're persecuted. The employees can't say Merry Christmas.

You know, we can get upset about small things, can't we? There are those, though, who are actually losing their jobs in America, losing businesses, being mistreated because of their stand for Christ.

I'll just tell you a few that have been in the news over the last decade. You've heard about them for sure. Do you remember that coach, Joe Kennedy, out in the state of Washington, and after every football game, the game's over.

He's off the clock. He's no longer on the payroll. Game's over. He would go down to the 50-yard line and kneel and pray. And some of the ballplayers started joining him, and some of the parents started joining him.

And the school started not liking it. And the school said, you've got to stop doing that. You cannot pray after the game. And he said, well, I'm going to pray.

[24:42] And so they fired him. Well, I don't know if you followed that or not, but if you followed it all the way through at the Supreme Court level. The Supreme Court said, you've got to give him his job back, and you've got to give him his back pay.

And that is a public gathering place. Anybody could be there.

He was through with his job. He was praying. You can't fire him for that. So he accepted his job back, accepted all of his payback, coached the next game, and then he resigned.

And he said, I just wanted to win my case, but I don't really want to keep working for this outfit. And now I think he's an evangelist. Here was another one.

You may not agree with what all these people did. That's between them and the Lord. But you probably heard about that lady, Kim Davis in Kentucky, who was in charge of handing out the marriage licenses and signing them.

[25 : 48] And when the Supreme Court came up with that case and said, yes, men can marry men and women can marry women, she refused to sign the certificates.

She said, I'm a Christian. I cannot put my name on a same-sex marriage certificate. It's against the Bible. And so they said, you will sign them or you will be fired.

And she said, then I'll be fired. And they said, you'll sign them or you'll go to jail for breaking the law. She went to jail. She was, now that's persecution.

She stayed there for, I think, only about a week or so before she was released. But she ended up with a \$360,000 fine.

And I think a lot of people and organizations contributed to help her pay that off. And because of her stand, it didn't change the law, but it did at least change this.

[26 : 51] In the state of Kentucky, they said, we don't need to have anybody sign the marriage certificates. We won't put anybody else in that position. They can just go down and receive a marriage certificate without a signature.

So she, in a sense, won in that way. Here's another one. I'll stop with this one. Jack Phillips in Colorado, the cake baker.

You're bound to have heard his case. He was a, he had a bakery. He loved to decorate cakes. You can look any of these up on YouTube or whatever online and read all about it or even see videos about it.

A good cake baker. So one day, two guys came in. We'd like for you to bake a cake. We're getting married. And he said, oh, I'm sorry. I'm just, I'm a believer.

I'm a follower of Jesus. I can't bake a cake for a man to marry a man. But listen, let me tell you, there's some other really good bakeries in town. Let me recommend them to you, et cetera.

[27 : 56] And they went and reported him to whatever police, the state of Colorado, arrested him. He ended up spending 12 years in courts arguing this case.

And finally, the Supreme Court of the United States said, you can't make a man or a woman do artwork that is opposed to their conscience.

And so he won the case. And praise the Lord for that. And then, of course, we have not seen this much in America. It has probably happened some.

But the persecution to the point of death is happening more in the world than it has ever happened. Martyrs. I read a report. I was studying this out yesterday.

A report that said probably about 5,000 Christians a year now are being killed for being Christians. That's why they're killing them in places like Africa, where the Muslims are pushing into more and more territory.

[29 : 03] In places all through the Middle East, Iran, Iraq, these areas, Saudi Arabia. You can be put in prison. You can be killed. In places like India, the Hindus will go.

And which one is that on the Voice of the Murderers? Ethiopia. Ethiopia. Ethiopia. It's about people in Ethiopia. They'll bomb a church. They'll burn a church down. They'll drag in the Congo.

Beheadings. They'll drag Christians out in the streets. Beat them to death. We need to remember to pray because we're all the body of Christ. We need to not forget that some Christians are truly, truly being persecuted.

And thank God it's not happened to that extent very much in America. But it is kind of the history of the Christian church.

That's why Jesus said it's going to happen. And so it's been said that maybe, I forgot a book. I've got to read something to you from John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.

[30 : 12] And it's here in my, where's my stuff? I don't know. There's a book right there on the, is that it? Oh, I left it back in my Sunday school room. Okay. You'll have to go with my memory.

This is scary. It's scary. Okay. Who was John Wesley? Okay. Okay. John Wesley started the Methodist church. The guy kept a journal. And so that journal is so full.

I was going to read some excerpts to you of, you know, I came into town tonight. Somebody threw a brick and hit me in the head. But I wiped it away and got up and preached standing on a stump.

And then a guy came up and tried to beat me with a big oak tree limb. But God somehow prevented it. And then as I turned to leave, another guy punched me in the mouth.

And I started bleeding. But I was glad to have come and shed some blood for Jesus. And it's all through his journals. What they went through. And what was his crime?

[31:13] He was being persecuted by supposed Christians because he was not going along with the Church of England. And if the Church of England was kind of saying, we've got to stop these Methodists.

They're taking away our authority. Sounds like the Pharisees to me. Anyway, so John Wesley, the great Methodist, went through a great deal.

There's a story told of him. They can't verify this one to be true, but it's been told forever. So I'm going to tell it. You've heard it before. Remember, Wesley was so used to being persecuted everywhere he went that it's said that once he was riding his horse between towns, going to preach in another town.

He rode his horse something like a quarter of a million miles preaching. A quarter of a million preaching. He would preach four or five times a day. I don't know the energy of that.

Wow. Anyway, he was an evangelist. He had the gift. So he's riding his horse, and it occurs to him, wait a minute. I haven't been hit by anything.

[32:18] No bricks. Nobody's punched me in the mouth. No eggs have even been thrown. No tomatoes. No. And he got off of his horse, and he said, Lord, have I offended you?

Have I sinned in some way? Well, why is my message no longer powerful? And as he was praying that, some guy in a field looked over and went, it's that John Wesley.

And he picked up a rock and threw it at him. It missed him. But the story goes, the rock hit the ground. He went, praise the Lord.

Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. You know, got back on his horse and kept going. So maybe, and I'll end on this thought, the thought being that we are called to testify.

And we talked about the possible outcomes. One of them could be that we may get persecuted for it. But I wonder if we ought to be concerned.

[33:22] Is our message so watered down and so weak? Are we so much like the non-Christians of this world that they don't even think about persecuting us?

Does it show that we've really watered down our lifestyle and our gospel? Should we be worried about it like John Wesley was? Well, that's something for you just to think about in your own life. Let's pray and our musicians will come. Lord, we give you praise today. We thank you for all that Jesus did for us.

Now you've said to us, you must testify. So, Lord, help us to remember that we don't need to give a prepared speech. We don't need to quote eight scriptures.

We don't need to argue. We just need to testify what Jesus has done for us personally. And then leave the results with you, O God.

[34:27] And, Lord, if persecution comes, help us to rejoice in it. And then give us the peace that passes understanding to endure it. And, Lord, we pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters who are suffering today in other lands for the sake of the gospel.

Protect them. Provide food, shelter, medical care. Protect them from their enemies and bless them. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen.