

The Four-Fold Witness
John 5:30-47

April 10, 2016

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^A Psalm 2:1-2
^B Romans 12:18
^C John 1:6-8, 19-28; Matthew 3:7-9

^D John 14:11
^E John 7:46; Luke 4:36; Matthew 7:29
^F Isaiah 5:20

A. Introduction

1. The Opposition

- a. Why are the nations in an uproar, And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His Anointed:" (Psalms 2:1-2)
- b. we are beset with unbelief and our faith attacked on all sides
- c. from the followers of the religion of science
- d. from the media
- e. from politicians who set at naught God's laws to proclaim their own

2. Compromise or Confrontation?

- a. how far are we to take "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." (Romans 12:18)
- b. when do we reach the limit?
- c. Jesus came as the Prince of Peace, to bring mankind to peace with God
- d. but in John 5, after the healing of the man who had been sick for 38 years, He encounters the opposition and the wrath of the religious rulers because He did this on the Sabbath, and he had told the man to take up His bed and walk.
- e. (There is an interesting regulation in this respect found in the Mishnah, Shabbat 10:5, that if a man took out "a living man on a couch his is not culpable by reason of the couch, since the couch is secondary" -{2}.)

B. God on the Witness Stand 5:30-40

1. The Confidence of Christ 5:30-32

a. In His Motives (30)

- (A) 30 'I myself am unable to do anything of my own self. I judge according as I hear, and my judgement is just, because I am not seeking my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.' (RGH)
- (B) as God, dwelling in man and among men, he was the perfect man, submitting Himself in everything to God the Father
- (C) moreover, He recognised as a man, his dependence on the Father
- (D) so, with such a clear conscience, He was able to withstand any and all criticism, knowing that He had a perfect relationship to his Father

b. In His Case (31-32)

- (A) 31 'If I myself should bear witness on my own behalf, my witness is not (admissibly) true. 32 There is Another who is bearing witness on my behalf and I know that the witness which He is witnessing on my behalf is (admissibly) true.' (RGH)
- (B) it was a rule of Jewish Law, and of our own common law, that a case cannot be decided upon the testimony of a single witness
- (C) in that sense, and only in that sense, the testimony of Jesus on His own behalf had no bearing nor weight in this confrontation
- (D) rather he has Another to provide witness on His behalf, and the preceding verses settle the matter that the Other spoken of is God
- (E) God provides that witness, testimony on behalf of Jesus, in a four-fold fashion, which would have been available to the rulers if they should have searched them out

2. One: John the Baptist 5:33-35

- a. 33 You yourselves have sent unto John and he has borne witness to the (real) truth; 34 Yet I myself do not grasp the witness which is of man, but I say these things in order that you yourselves should be saved. 35 That man was a lamp which was burning and shining, and you yourselves were willing for a short hour to rejoice in his light.' (RGH)
- b. the first fold in God's witness was this John the Baptist, as describe in John 1:6-8, "There came a man, sent from God ... he came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light ... he was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light."
- c. the delegation of scribes who came to John the Baptist in John 1:19-28, after declaring that he was not the Christ, he bore witness of Christ, "... among you stands One whom you did not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."
- d. John's testimony concerning Christ at that time
- e. their abandonment of John upon his warning to them as a "brood of vipers." (Matthew 3:7-9)
- f. but Jesus has no need to receive mere witness from man

3. Two: The Works of God 5:36

- a. 36 'Yet I myself have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given to me that I should accomplish them, these very works that I am doing, these witness on my behalf that the Father has sent me.' (RGH)

- b. the second fold: the miracles that Jesus performed had diverse purposes
 - (A) in healing to overcome the effects of sin
 - (B) but especially in the gospel of John they are related as signs of His authority and power
 - (C) the 38 years this man had been in bondage, but now he had been set free, a picture of salvation
- c. In John 14:11, Jesus to his doubting and questioning disciples said, "... otherwise believe on account of the works themselves."

4. Three: The Father Himself 5:37-38

- a. 37 'And the Father who sent me, the same has borne witness on my behalf. Neither His voice have you at any time ever heard, nor His likeness have you beheld.' (RGH)
 - (A) at the baptism of Christ
 - (B) but also in the words that Jesus spoke, the Father spoke
 - (C) "never man spake as this man' (John 7:46)
- b. 38 'and you do not have His word abiding in you, for your yourselves are disbelieving in the one whom he sent.' (RGH)
 - (A) because God's word was absent from their heart, soul and mind
 - (B) for they were unacquainted with God in a personal way
 - (C) they failed to recognise that these were the words of God
 - (D) but not to others as seen in such passages as
 - (1) "And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." (Luke 4:36)
 - (2) "for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." (Matthew 7:29)
 - (E) Jesus' own words, evidently from God, were the third fold of the witness on His behalf, provided by God

5. Four: The Scriptures 5:39-40

- a. 39 'You are (continually) searching the Scriptures, for in them you think yourselves to have eternal life; and those same (Scriptures) are (continually) witnessing on my behalf.' (RGH)
 - (A) this is a statement, rather than a command to the Pharisees
 - (1) the Pharisees paraded their Bible reading in public as they did their prayers
 - (2) but they did so with a legal spirit
 - (3) not to discover what God had to say to them (so when He did speak through Jesus, it was foreign to

them)

- (4) but, as it were, to find the loop-holes whereby they could claim to pass all the tests
- (5) so they evaluated themselves as righteous, on which basis they foresaw their having a place in His kingdom, in His heaven

(B) but they failed to listen to its message

- (1) compare Matthew 23 where Jesus upbraids them for their hypocrisy of saying one thing, doing another
- (2) they misread and misunderstood God in His written word
- (3) failed to discern the living word when he stood before them

b. 39 'and you are unwilling to come to me so that you should have life.' (RGH)

- (A) Jesus has answered the opposition
- (B) so the question to them was "What will you do with the evidence?"
- (C) the evidence was not flawed but their wills: "They reject Him. And other witnesses more to their liking – the prophet John, the great works of Jesus, the Scriptures, even Moses – do not convince them" –^{3}.
- (D) as elsewhere in John, we are also called to act on the evidence given

C. Christ Assesses the Opposition 5:41-47

1. Their Wrong Motivation. 5:41-44

a. "I do not receive glory from men;" (v 41), or, 'I do not grasp at the glory of man's approval.' – the implication: they do grasp at it

- (A) Jesus begins to contrast His motives to theirs
- (B) they have come rebuking, accusing, belittling Him; all on account of the circumstances surrounding the miracle He has done, because it did not dot their I's nor cross their t's
- (C) Jesus is not seeking their approval, for it is of no value to him

b. "but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves." (v 42) – or "I have known you"

- (A) Jesus is not making some surface valuation
- (B) like John the Baptist, he has discerned what these men are really like – "Brood of vipers"
- (C) their religion is devoid of God's love
 - (1) not fulfilling the great commandment of love towards God
 - (2) hence incapable of love towards the Christ of God

c. "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him." (v 43)

- (A) they were out of touch with God and his truth

- (B) out of love with God
 - (C) these resulted in their inability to discern Messiah when He came, but a willingness to accept any false teacher who came along
 - (D) "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20)
- d. "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and only God?*" (v 44)
- (A) Jesus did not grasp after the approval of man; but they did
 - (B) their religion, based as it was on externals, on ritual and show
 - (1) rather than in loving the Lord their God with their all
 - (2) and loving their neighbour as themselves
 - (3) was shallow and designed to impress each other
 - (C) "These Jewish leaders liked so much to be praised by people that they ended up shutting God out of their lives. But are we so different? Other people's opinions can make us doubt Jesus and doubt ourselves; but God's verdict is the only one that really counts. ^{4}" – not opinions of scientists, TV celebrities, educators, politicians

2. Their Self-Deception 5:45-47

- a. "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (vv 45-47)
- (A) the Jewish religious rulers had convinced themselves that they were following the Law of Moses in its minutest details
 - (B) but the fact of the matter is that they had added so much of man's traditions that they did not know what Moses wrote very well
 - (C) so when Jesus came as the promised Christ (Messiah) they were unable to recognize Him and that He fulfilled the Law of Moses

D. Conclusion

1. Facing the World's Opposition

- a. Christ has given us an example of how to face such criticism
- b. His assessment of the opposition gives us some principles

- (A) make sure that our own motives are pure
 - (B) ensure that it is God's rather than men's approval we seek
 - (C) be sure that we do believe what we profess to believe
- c. rely upon the Holy Spirit who testifies that we are God's children

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 National Council of Churches of Christ; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

Bruce	--	<i>The Gospel & Epistles of John</i> , by F. F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; 1983
EBC	-	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> , © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, MI: <i>John</i> , by Merrill C. Tenney
NICNT	-	<i>The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> <i>The Gospel according to John</i> , by Leon Morris
NTC	-	<i>New Testament Commentary</i> , by William Hendrickson; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
RWP	-	<i>Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament</i> , by Dr. A. T. Robertson

2. NICNT, vn 38, Jn 5:10, p. 306; actual text in another translation is “*If one man carries a loaf into the public domain he is liable; if two carry it they are exempt. If one is not able to carry it alone and two carry it out, they are liable. But Rabbi Shimon exempts them. If one carries out foods that are less than the prescribed quantity in a vessel, he is exempt even for carrying the vessel since that the vessel is an accessory to it the food. If one carries out a living person on a bed he is exempt even for carrying the bed since that is an accessory to him the person. If one carries out a corpse on a bed he is liable. And similarly if one carries out an olive bulk's worth of a corpse, or an olive bulk's worth of a Nevelah an improperly slaughtered animal of a permitted species, or a lentil size's worth of a creeping thing, he is liable. But Rabbi Shimon deems him exempts.*”
3. Daily Bread, March 3, 1991
4. *Ibid*