

The Witness of the Body

Scripture: John 15:26–27

Code: 1310

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of God's communication to man, He has endeavored to manifest His image in man. When He sent Jesus Christ into the world, He planted His own person into a human body. Christ was the image of God (Heb. 1:3); but that body arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is no longer visible on earth. So, Christ sent His Holy Spirit to bring a new body into existence; not a physical body but a spiritual body - the church. And in the church, Christ continues to dwell, through the indwelling Spirit. Christ is in the body, the church, manifesting His glory and His attributes, just as He did in His human body when He was here for thirty-three years. When Christ's literal body was here, He manifested love, holiness, wisdom, power, and the glory of God. Through this new spiritual body, the church, He wants to manifest these same identical characteristics.

A. The Body's Manifestation

God's will for this earthly body called the church, is, as Paul says in Ephesians 4:13, that all its members "*come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God... unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*" We are actually to become one body like Christ. We are the new manifestation of Jesus Christ as He indwells us by His Spirit. And He has designed to manifest, through the church, His manifold wisdom and glory. Paul tells us, in Romans 8:28-29, that God has predestined us "*to be conformed to the image of His Son.*" Imagine the miraculous nature of such an act, that Christ can take these frail physical bodies, subject to sin and death, and make them into His temple--literally dwelling in us and planting in us His glory, to manifest Himself to the world. We are, individually as well as a body, called to manifest Christ.

B. The Body's Witness

1. AS A TOTAL BODY

It is through the body, the collective unity of all believers, that Christ wants to manifest His mighty, victorious power to the world. This is the point of our existence as a body - as a witness to the world. We are called together to be matured, taught, and built up so that we might witness to the world. Within the body there is a diversity of gifts, and the more we minister to each other with these gifts, the more we become one, and the more the world can see our oneness. When the world sees our oneness, they'll know that Christ came from God--and this is what Jesus prayed for (John 17:21-23).

2. AS INDIVIDUAL BODY MEMBERS

No individual member of the body is excused from being a witness. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "*You shall*

receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses." There is no option there, none at all! The Apostle Paul carefully points this out in 2 Cor. 5:17-18, *"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation."* There isn't anybody who is excused from that. Anyone who has been reconciled to Christ has the ministry of communicating reconciliation to others. Paul continues, *"Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"* (v. 20). Every believer who's been born again and reconciled, has been given the ministry of reconciliation - no believer is excused!

For our present study, I want to look at John 15:26-27 and see what the New Testament teaches about the nature of our witness--as individual members and as a total body. Our text reads as follows: *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning."* As we study these two verses we're going to discover that they contain the whole scheme of the witness of the body--all the way from God to you and everything in between.

*** Court is now in session**

The word *"witness"* in John 15:27, is a very interesting word. It is a legal term and takes us into a courtroom scene: We see a judge on the bench and a prisoner on trial. We hear the case argued by lawyers - first the prosecution, then the defense. Both call witnesses to substantiate their cases. We, as individual members of the body, are individual witnesses in the trial. Who's on trial? Jesus Christ. Who's the judge? The world. Who's the defense attorney? The Holy Spirit. Who's the prosecution? Satan, with his lies and accusations.

As witnesses in this trial, we have two ways to witness - as individual members and as a total body:

1) As individual members

As individuals, we are separate witnesses in a situation where Jesus Christ is on trial before the world. And the world is constantly judging Christ on the basis of the witnesses. Some people judge Him to be a fake; some judge Him to be a good man; others judge Him to be a teacher; while others, a liar, and so on. Do you see how absolutely strategic your witness becomes? If your witness tears down the claims of Jesus Christ by the kind of life you live, you'd be better off if you were out of the courtroom altogether. You only confuse the issue! The devil is the prosecutor, accusing Christ and the witnesses with lies and false accusations. But notice in John 15:26 the phrase, *"when the Comforter is come."* The word *"comforter"* in the Greek *parakletos*, and means "one called alongside to help." The word came to mean "the counsel for the defense." The Comforter refers to the Holy Spirit who is defending Christ and calling us, as individual members of the body, to witness and confirm the testimony of Christ. Sad to say, this isn't always the case! If you're a Christian, you're a witness. The only question is, "Are you a good one or a bad one?"

2) As a body

The second way we can witness is as a body. The body witnesses by its unity (John 13:34,35; 17:7). Can you imagine the devastating impact that a united church would have on this world? Now I don't mean an ecumenical church where everybody kisses doctrine good-bye, throws their arms around each other, and marches off to battle over the struggle for social rights. The body of Christ needs to be one and, sadly, we're not! Today the testimony of the body is pathetic. Our testimony is strife, division, carnality, and confusion. And the world is rendering its verdict on the strength of these two kinds of witnesses --as individual members of the body, and the body as a whole.

In John 15:26-27, I want you to see THE NATURE OF EFFECTIVE WITNESS. Effective witness has six characteristics, and they're all given in these two verses. Christian witness is: (1) to the world; (2) of the Son; (3) by the Father; (4) through the Holy Spirit; (5) in the individual member; (6) in the total body.

I. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS TO THE WORLD (v. 26-27)

A. The Object Of Our Witness

Verse 27 of John 15 says, “*And ye also shall bear witness.*” Now you’ll notice that it gives no object. It doesn’t say to whom we are to bear witness. However, it’s obviously in reference to the world, because that’s what John has been talking about since verse 18 of this chapter. He has been talking about the antagonistic, hateful, Christ-despising world. This is the object of our witness.

B. The Nature Of The World

We will never really understand the nature of our witness, as a body or as individual members, until we understand the nature of the world. This is because it is before the world that Jesus is on trial. Now John’s writings spell out clearly what the world is. The prince and the ruler of this world is the devil (John 12:31); and the whole world is in his power (1 John 5:19). The world is controlled by Satan! It’s true that the world is passing away (1 John 2:17), but while it lasts, its hatred of the church is deep and bitter. The words in our text of John 15:26-27 are embedded in a context of the world’s hostility and hatred (v. 18, 19, 21, 24, 25; 16:1-3). The world hates, ostracizes, and kills. But Jesus goes on to show that we must witness to the world; and the key is in verse 26, “*But when the Comforter is come.*” With the Holy Spirit we have the power to confront the hostile, hating world and witness to it.

C. The Proper Reaction To Opposition

How is a body member to react when he’s faced with the opposition of the world? If they throw you out and curse you, what are you supposed to do? Retaliate in anger? No! Withdraw and go back to a Bible study? No! You’re bravely to bear witness before the world, whatever the cost may be, and “*count it all joy*” to suffer for Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 1:24; Phil. 1:12).

II. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS OF THE SON (v. 26-27)

“*...He shall testify of Me; and ye shall also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.*” Our testimony is of the Son.

A. The World’s Hatred Is Focused On Christ

In verse 25 Christ said, “*They hated Me without a cause.*” It is Jesus Christ who is on trial, and our testimony must be of Him. We can’t accommodate the world and water down and dilute our testimony of Christ, because a man can’t be saved without a full knowledge of who Jesus Christ is (Gal. 1:7-12).

B. All True Testimony Is About Christ

You see, throughout the Gospels, every time there is preaching it is always Jesus Christ who is central.

1. THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN

In Revelation 1:2 it says that John “*bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” He reiterates the same idea in Rev. 12:17. Any kind of testimony or witness was always directly associated with Jesus Christ.

2. THE TESTIMONY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In Revelation 19:10b it says that the Old Testament witnessed to Christ: “*The Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.*” Christ’s testimony is the character of the Old Testament prophecy (1Peter 1:10,11).

3. THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

Jesus told the Apostles, before and after His death and resurrection, that they were to testify of Him. In Acts 1:8 He said, “*You shall be My witnesses.*” And they obeyed -- their sermons in the early church were always about Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 10:38-43).

* What is the content of your witnessing?

It’s amazing how much so-called witnessing has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. Much time is spent talking about religion or the church, or vaguely about God. People say, “Oh, I witnessed to my friend.” When we ask them what they said, they reply, “Well, I kind of let them know that I go to church.” That’s not witnessing! A witness gives testimony to Jesus Christ. Often our witnessing is an autobiography, and we never get around to Christ. We tell our whole testimony, and the listener might not know any more about Jesus than when we started. Witnessing is not a discussion of the church, religion or you; it is a testimony to Jesus Christ! That’s witnessing, and don’t let your conscience let you get away with anything less!

III. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS BY THE FATHER (v. 26)

“*When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father...*” When Jesus Christ sent the Spirit, He was really sending God’s witness to this world; for the Spirit proceeded from the Father and bore the Father’s testimony to the world. The greatest witness of Christ is the Father. It was the Father’s supreme concern to bring honor and glory to the Son. In John 8:54 Jesus said, “*If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing; it is My Father that honoreth Me.*” Back in John 5:37 Jesus said, “*And the Father Himself who hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me.*” In other words, Jesus is saying, “The Father is My chief witness. He is the one primarily concerned with communicating who I am. And I am merely sending you the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, to carry the Father’s witness and plant it within you.”

HOW DID THE FATHER BEAR WITNESS TO THE SON?

A. Through the Old Testament

1. JOHN 5:39

Jesus said to the Jews, “*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me.*” The Old Testament is all about Jesus Christ.

2. LUKE 24:27

Jesus said to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, “*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself.*” The Old Testament was the Father’s witness to the Son (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10,11).

B. Through Christ's Words and Works

1. JOHN 10:25

"Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." The miraculous works that Jesus did were the Father's witness that He was who He claimed to be.

2. JOHN 14:10

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." The very works that Christ did were actually the works of the Father attesting to His claim to deity.

C. By Direct Verbal Witness

1. AT HIS BAPTISM

In Matthew 3:17, at the baptism of Jesus, the Father spoke from heaven and said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

2. AT HIS TRANSFIGURATION

In Matthew 17:5, the Father said in a voice from heaven, to Peter, James and John: *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."*

The Father, then, is the source of all witness about Christ; and the entire witness is recorded for us in Scripture: The Old Testament prophecies, the works that Jesus did, the words that He spoke, the direct statements of the Father. Our witness should be an echo of the Father's witness. How do you know what His witness was? Diligently study the Word!

IV. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS THROUGH THE SPIRIT (v. 26)

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." The Spirit only bears the Father's testimony; so actually, it's the Father's witness that comes through the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit actually operated in Christ to testify. This same Spirit also indwells and empowers our witness; for we cannot witness for Christ apart from the Holy Spirit. All true witness is through the Spirit. This verse plainly tells us that the Father's testimony of Jesus comes through the Holy Spirit; so whatever witness God has in the world, He has through the Spirit.

Notice that the Holy Spirit has two names in verse 26: *"Comforter"* and *"Spirit of truth."*

A. *"Comforter"*

"Comforter" in the Greek is *parakletos* which literally means "one called alongside to help, comfort, or give advice," and came to mean "a lawyer or an advocate." As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is Christ's defense lawyer, the world is the judge, and we are called into the court to testify.

B. *"Spirit of truth"*

This name reveals the kind of testimony the Holy Spirit gives. He cannot be a false witness; He is truth and always declares truth.

The Spirit, then, is the witness in us, glorifying Christ through us. Christ operated in the power of the Spirit, and so must we.

V. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS IN THE MEMBERS (v. 27)

“And ye also shall bear witness.” This has special reference the disciples who were with Him; but it also includes us, individual members of His body, the church.

A. The Indwelling Spirit Qualifies Us

Since the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we are the vehicle carrying the witness that proceeds from the Father by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has no physical voice and no platform to do His witnessing, unless it's through us.

1. JOHN 14:17

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, to dwell with us and in us.

2. 1 COR. 6:19-20

Paul says, *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”* He lives within us, so His witness is in our bodies as individuals.

3. ROMANS 8:9

“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Every believer possesses the Holy Spirit. So, if the Holy Spirit is going to speak, it'll be through us because that's where He dwells.

4. ACTS 4:31

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” The Spirit of God indwelling us gives us the power to witness.

B. Our Firsthand Experience Qualifies Us

We are not only qualified to be witnesses because of the resident Holy Spirit, but we are qualified because we've experienced Jesus Christ firsthand. You can't be a witness if you haven't experienced it. When a witness is called into court, he is asked, “What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel?” A witness is someone with firsthand experience. John says, *“That which... we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes...and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...that we declare unto you.”* (1 John 1:1,3). That's what a witness is! All you need to do is say, “I have met Jesus Christ. I have seen Him, heard Him, and touched Him.” Then you are a qualified witness. Our task is not to lecture about Jesus with philosophical detachment; it is to say, “I want to share the Christ that I have seen, heard, and touched with my life.” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-21). Our witness of Christ must be more precious to us than our lives; it was for many. Down through the years, the Greek word *martuv*, which is the word for “witness,” came to mean “martyr,” because many times when believers were standing up as witnesses for Christ, it cost them their lives. May God give us more people who will

witness effectively - whatever the cost.

VI. CHRISTIAN WITNESS IS IN THE BODY (v. 27)

The Spirit not only indwells and empowers each individual member of the body, but He also indwells and empowers the entire, collective body - the church. Ephesians 2:22 says, "*Ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*" The entire church body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, just as the individual member is (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16,17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16). The Holy Spirit is the power for witnessing, indwelling the total body in the same sense that He indwells the member, so that the body might also witness.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS THE BODY WITNESSES IN COLLECTIVE, SINGLE TESTIMONY:

A. The Body Witnesses By Its Unity

In John 17:20-21 Christ prayed, "*Neither pray I for these alone (the disciples), but for them also who shall believe Me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*" The Spirit indwells all of us, so that our witness might be total unified witness of one. If only the world could see as one - what an impact it would make!

B. The Body Witnesses By Its Love

In John 13:34-35 Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" We witness by our unity and our love. We could absolutely devastate this world if we could show them our concerted, unified, single love for each other. What a testimony that would be! In these verses, verses 34-35, Jesus actually gives the world the right to judge whether you or are really born again, by whether or not we love our brothers. That's a frightening thought!

We are the last link in the witness of the Father. The testimony started with the Father, about the Son, through the Spirit, and came to us. We're the last link in the witness to Jesus Christ. The testimony of Christ must not break down on this level. Do your part as a member to witness individually and do your part for the body to create unity by ministering your spiritual gift and by loving. Then the ministry and the mission of the Father in sending the Son will come to pass; God intended. There's a world to be won --but it won't begin until we are one!

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