

FOUR WITNESSES FOR THE SON OF GOD

John 5:31-47

Leitvers 5:36

"I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."

Let us give thanks to God for the Bible study from John's Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who gives eternal life. In John 1 we learned that Jesus is God himself. He is the eternal word. But he became flesh and dwelt among us. He came so that all who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life. In John 5 he healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years. The Jewish leaders felt challenged and accused Jesus. Jesus taught them that he did God's works and that God had given him all authority. He even gave them the promise: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." But the Jews would not listen to him or believe him. Therefore Jesus named four witnesses who testified that he is the Son of God: John the Baptist, the works, God himself and the Scriptures.

Today we learn to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to work together for God's ministry. We also learn that our Bible study must not be superficial because then we will miss the eternal life. Rather, our Bible study should be deep in order to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, obey him and devote ourselves completely to his eternal work of redemption.

1. The testimonies of John the Baptist and the works of God (31-38)

Let us read verses 31 and 32: "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid." The first witness Jesus cites is John the Baptist. John the Baptist was well known to the Jews. When the Pharisees and the

scribes sent a commission of inquiry to him, John had testified who he was and who Jesus was. His testimony of himself was: "I am neither the Christ nor the prophet. I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord preparing the way for the Lord.' I myself am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water." John's testimony of Jesus was (John 1:29-34): "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. This is the Son of God."

Jesus says John's testimony was true: "You have sent to John and he testified to the truth." Jesus doesn't really need a human witness. He is God, so why should a man take the stand for him and testify on his behalf? But Jesus wanted to help the Jews. Let us read verse 34: "Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved." People are saved when they accept Jesus as the Son of God. But the Jewish superiors were not blessed. They were supposed to be shepherds of the flock of God and servants of God. But they were preoccupied with the envy and hatred in their hearts and wanted to kill Jesus (5:18). Jesus' heart broke. He wanted to help them to be saved.

But Jesus also knew that they were not willing to learn. As they had not accepted Jesus' testimony, they did not accept the testimony of John. Therefore Jesus' words are to be read in such a way that they had the chance to become blessed. They found John funny who wore clothes made of camel hair and ate locusts and wild honey and looked grim and rebuked his listeners loudly. They wanted to be cheerful in his light for a

little while. But they did not heed the earnest warning in John's words and did not listen to his testimony that Jesus is the Son of God. Whoever does not accept the testimony of Jesus as the Son of God cannot be saved. And yet there are always those who allow themselves to be warned and return to God through repentance. Jesus uses the testimony of people so that sinners come to understanding, repent and be saved. Andrew and John were disciples of the Baptist. They also heard his testimony of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They accepted his testimony and followed Jesus, found the place where he was staying, stayed with him and were blessed. Not only that but they became witnesses of the Son of God to the ends of the earth, beginning with Andrew's testimony to his brother: "We have found the Messiah!"

Jesus' heart is breaking because of the young people on campus who, because of the false teachings and irresponsibility of the leaders, consider Christianity to be something old-fashioned or think about Jesus to be an intellectual plaything. This is why Jesus uses us as witnesses on campus so that the young people can come to understanding, repent and be blessed as disciples of Jesus.

Let us read verse 36: "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me." The second testimony of Jesus as the Son of God are His works. Jesus even says that this testimony of the works is even weightier. What were the works that Jesus did? We got to know some of his works in John 2 to 5: In Cana at the wedding he had changed water into wine. At Sychar in Samaria, he had opened the heart of a bitter woman and had made living water flow in her soul. Back in Galilee, he had healed the terminally ill son of a royal official by the faith of his father. And in Jerusalem he had healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years and had commanded him to get up and walk. Jesus did many other works. Matthew 11:5 says, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk,

those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." These works testify that Jesus was sent by God. Only the Son of God, who came down from heaven, can do such works. Jesus' works are the works of the Messiah. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise. Jesus' works testify to His authority from God and His identity as the Son of God.

The Jews could also see these works. One of them was Nicodemus. He came to Jesus and confessed (John 3:2): "No one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." Although they saw the works that testified about Jesus, they did not accept this testimony either. If they had accepted the testimony of the works, they should have accepted Jesus as the Son of God. But they were angry at him. Those who are angry with those authorized by God do not accept the testimony of the works either.

This year we celebrate the forty years of God's work through the obedience of missionary Dr. Peter Chang and the dedication of his house church. Every year we remember God's amazing works during these forty years, who had this manger ministry grow from a sermon in front of a flowerpot to a spiritual headquarters. Through reports and testimonies, visits and stays and the participation in conferences and forums during these forty years innumerable coworkers of UBF worldwide and many other ministries have seen and accepted the testimony of these works and decided to cooperate.

In 2011 the Global Leadership Empowerment began with the conference in Gemünd with the title "Young Leaders transforming the World." In the past years, God worked mightily through this work of faith, as the leaders of the next generation of UBF repented with tears, studied seriously the Word of God and began to work as self-motivated Bible teachers. The younger ones of them participate through early prayer,

factual study and prayer circles in the schools. Many servants and maids of God and parents came and saw this work, recognized it as a testimony of authority and praised God. They would be like the man born blind in John 9, who confessed joyfully about Jesus to the Pharisees: "Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If he were not from God, he could do nothing." It was impossible to get young people to obey the faith without the authority of God, but it has happened and is still happening among us. The works of God are too many to be reported here and are already filling a book. Like Jesus, God's people can proudly say, "The works that I do bear witness to me that the Father has sent me."

However, others ignored and denied that God is at work here through his servants although they saw the same works and heard the same testimonies. They even began to persecute God's work and slander God's servants. Jesus admonished the Jews in verses 37 and 38, in which he referred to the third witness, God himself: "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent." According to Jesus' word, they rejected the witness of the works and the testimony of God out of their pride and hardened hearts. The word of God did not dwell in them. God's word dwells in those who repent and change the ruler in their life. They can also accept the testimony of the works and rejoice because of them.

The miracles we have seen over the past forty years through the obedience of faith and dedication of the house church of the servant of God, the house churches of the local shepherds and the leaders of the next generation are God's work. This year let us celebrate the 40th anniversary with all those in whom God's Word dwells with all our hearts with the vision that God is doing even greater works through us: the restoration of Germany as a shepherd nation and Europe as a continent sending out missionaries, the mobilization of the next generation as global

spiritual leaders and the establishment of three mission bases in Muslim countries.

In this section we have heard that Jesus is the Son of God. John, the works and God Himself give clear testimony of him. If, despite the many testimonies, there is still hatred and rebellion against God's servants and His Word and God Himself, which devour us from within, we must repent and let Jesus rule our life. By accepting Jesus as the Son of God, let us be blessed and work together for the upcoming Junior Leadership Camp, the Global Leadership Empowerment Forum and the 40th anniversary of the Lord with all our strength.

2. The testimony of the Scriptures (39-47)

Let us read verse 39: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me," Here Jesus is referring to her Bible study. Scripture is the fourth witness for Jesus as the Son of God. The Jews were apparently experts at Bible study. The Pharisees were trained to know the Scriptures well. They learned the five books of Moses by heart, as well as the prophets, psalms, proverbs and history books. Among them there were the scribes who had special knowledge of the Bible. But something was wrong with their Bible studies. Jesus says that they missed the most important point of the Scriptures, namely Jesus himself. They were looking for eternal life in the scriptures, but at the same time they rejected Jesus. What was wrong with their Bible study? Jesus rebukes their impure motive: "You refuse to come to me to have life." They studied the Bible not to come to the knowledge of the truth and obey God, but to justify their own sinful lives and to confirm their own preconceived ideas. Therefore, they studied the Bible very selectively. Their Bible study was characterized by omissions and quotations that were taken out of context. They picked out words that just suited them and rejected others that admonished them. Thus they studied incompletely and tore the Scriptures apart. Thus they accused the one who was

healed in John 5 of working on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10b), but left out the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy (Ex 20:8). They did this because they were unable and unwilling to do God's works as Jesus did.

The Scriptures testify about Jesus. According to verses 46 and 47, the whole Scripture is a unity: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" In Scripture, we find the testimony of Jesus in every part of God's history from Genesis to Revelation. When we read Genesis 1, we find that God created earth and heaven and all things from nothing through His almighty Word. In Genesis 3 we find the disobedience of mankind as the cause of sin. Genesis 12 tells of Abraham, whom God called to be a blessing for all the generations on earth. Abraham believed God and saw the day of Jesus and rejoiced (John 8:56). Moses wrote about Jesus in his five books and taught the people a holy life pleasing to God through obedience to His commandments. The Babylonian captivity teaches the consequences of disobedience and the restart through the holy seed. In Jesus the whole law and the prophets are fulfilled by his obedience until death on the cross. The Acts of the Apostles and the epistles testify to the obedience of Jesus' followers towards His world mission command. The Bible does not tell stories randomly strung together, but tells the story of God who, through the obedience of the One, restores the lost paradise and redeems his people, so that they can be used as a kingdom of priests and holy people for the whole world.

Our Bible studies must not be selective. Our Bible study must lead us to recognize Jesus in context and accept the basic principles. Verse 39 says, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me," If our Bible study does not lead us to meet God, it is only a self-deception and an alibi for continuing our lives according to sinful desires.

However, through intensive and sincere Bible study we may know the context of God's history and meet and obey God. Such a Bible study is life-changing.

Anthony Norris Groves was a successful dentist in England in the early 19th century. Although he was wealthy, he was not happy. He felt as if he was not really serving God. As a result, he devoted himself to Bible study with his wife. Through Matthew 6:33, they realized what kind of life God wanted from His people in Christ Jesus. They made a decision and gave first their tithes, then a quarter and finally all they had for God. Finally, Groves gave up his profession and went to Persia as a missionary. He confessed that it was everyone's duty to give everything for Christ absolutely and without reservation. His biblical faith influenced George Müller, who began a life of complete dependence on God and wrote history of faith for the glory of God through his work with the orphans in Bristol.

Dr. Samuel Lee studied the Bible through the Daily Bread from Genesis to Revelation for eight years, and then another four years. Then he found the testimony of Jesus in the Scriptures. He found God's plan to call a person like Abraham to bless him and also to make him a blessing for all the generations on earth. Thereupon he taught God's hope with the prayer "A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation". In his shepherd life he learned that many Bible students were only interested in getting something. When they were challenged to carry the cross of missions, they stopped or even became enemies. But he continued teaching God's hope and God's mission for a fallen world. Through his Bible study many of Jesus' disciples, shepherds and Bible teachers all over the world were raised.

These stories of faith began with the Bible study. Christians like Dr. Groves, George Müller and Dr. Lee searched the Scriptures by asking what the will of God was for their lives. They found the testimony of Jesus, the Son of God, who gave his life as a ransom for many, and decided to offer their lives. At

a time when so many theologians and pastors were relativizing God's Word, God used them as influential preachers of justice.

Can we imagine that they despised God's words about burnt offerings, fellowship offerings and grain offerings, or that they rejected the whole Old Testament as not relevant to Christians because of the food commandments in Leviticus 11? This thought is ridiculous. Rather, they assumed through Bible study that their life in Jesus could be an offering pleasing to God. Here we learn that fruitful Bible study must be intense and serious. We do not only hear a word on Sundays how we would drink a glass of Coke, but we study the Bible by observing, interpreting and applying it carefully and we struggle to accept and obey the word of God personally. Even as a Bible teacher it is not enough to occasionally throw a word of God to a Bible student. Rather, we conduct one-to-one Bible studies to help them to encounter Jesus, the Son of God, to grow as obedient disciples who in turn are used to establish the obedience of faith.

In the past year we were allowed to study the five books of Moses and recognized the life of Jesus and learned about life as a holy people of God and as a kingdom of priests. This year God gives us grace to study Nehemiah and the books of history and prophets during and after the Babylonian captivity, which testify to Jesus, the Son of God and teach us a victorious life as a leader. Let us thank God that he gives us the grace to be able to lead such a life-giving Bible study in a spiritually dark time. Let us accept God's plan of salvation in the preparation of the conferences and in the one-to-one study teams and obey Him unconditionally and with devotion, so that we do not remain useless people, but grow to become global spiritual leaders.

Why then was the Bible study of the Pharisees and scribes so superficial and false and led to them to miss the core of the Bible? It was because they were seeking their own glory. They led their lives only seemingly for God, but in reality for their

sinful ego. Let us read verses 41-44: "I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" The Jews could not believe because they took honor from one another. God had given them his grace to be shepherds and Bible teachers for God's flock. But to be a shepherd is not human honor. In human terms it is the lowest service and requires complete self-denial and devotion to the end. But it is a great honor with God. All servants of God who were used by God as shepherds for His flock led a life as living stones, which were rejected by men, but which are chosen and precious with God. But the Jews loved human honor. They clothed themselves in long robes and thought they were worthy to be honored because of their position, age or education. But none of them obeyed God's calling, and there was no love in them. Verse 45 says that the Scripture to which they appealed became their judge. God's Word itself spoke out against them and condemned their disobedience.

John the Baptist and the works of Jesus and God himself testify that Jesus is the Son of God. By accepting the testimony for the Son of God, we, as those empowered by God, work for His salvation ministry, beginning with the Junior Leadership Camp and the Global Leadership Empowerment Forum and the 40th Anniversary Service.

We also learn that the Scripture testifies to Jesus that God does his work of salvation through the obedience of faith of one man. May God bless our Bible study and 10,000 one-to-one Bible study teams and establish Bible teachers at every faculty and university who obey God and give themselves unreservedly for world mission.