

## FOUR WITNESSES FOR THE SON OF GOD

John 5:31-47

Key Verse 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 of John's gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who gives eternal life. In John 1 we learned that Jesus God himself is. He is the eternal word. But he became flesh and lived among us. He came that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. In John 5, he cured a 38-year-old paralytic. The Jewish superiors accused Jesus because he worked on the Sabbath and called God his Father. Jesus taught them that he was doing God's works and that God had given him all authority. He even gave them the promise: "Verily, verily, I say to you: He who hears my word and believe him who sent me, he has eternal life and will not enter into the but he has passed from death to life." But the Jews wanted don't listen to him, don't believe him. That is why Jesus named four witnesses testified that he is the Son of God: John the Baptist, the works, God himself and the writing.

We learn today to accept Jesus as the Son of God, to follow him and to be responsible for God's work together. We also learn that our Bible studies are not superficial because then we miss out on life. Our Bible study should rather be be profound, that we recognize Jesus as the Son of God, have eternal life and give ourselves completely over 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 brings is John the Baptist. John the Baptist was well known to the Jews. When the Pharisees and scribes to him, John had testified as to who he was and who Jesus is. His testimony of himself was that he was not the Christ nor the Prophet. "I am a voice of a preacher in the desert, paving the way for the Lord. I'm not worthy to untie his shoe laces myself, and baptize only with water. John's testimony of Jesus reads (cf. John 1:29-34): "This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! The Spirit came from heaven as a dove and remain on him. It is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. This is the Son of God."

Jesus says that John's testimony was true: "You sent for John, and he has borne witness to the truth." Actually, Jesus doesn't need a human witness. He is God, why would a man take the stand for him and confirm it? Jesus but 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 get blessed, when they accept Jesus as the Son of God. But the Jewish superiors were not blessed. They should actually be shepherds of God's flock and servants of God. But they dealt with the envy and hatred in their hearts and wanted to kill Jesus (5,18). Jesus' heart broke. He wanted to help them to become blessed.

But Jesus also knew that they were not ready, just as they did not they did not accept the testimony of John either. Jesus Words therefore serve at the same time as a warning for all who see him as the Son of God reject. They found John funny, who wore clothes made of camel hair and He ate locusts and wild honey and looked grim and rebuked his listeners loudly. They wanted to be happy in his light for a little while be. But they did not heed the serious warning in the words of John 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 through repentance come to God return. Jesus uses the testimony of people so that sinners can come to the understanding come, repent and be saved. Andrew and John were disciples of the Baptist. They also heard his testimony of Jesus, the Lamb of God who bears sin to the world. They accepted the testimony and followed him, found his hostel, stayed with him and were blissfully happy. Not only that, but they themselves became witnesses of the Son of God until end of the earth, through which many were saved.

Jesus' heart is breaking because of the young people on campus who are being killed because of the heresies and the irresponsibility of the leaders consider Christianity to be something old-fashioned or thinking about Jesus for an intellectual game. That is why Jesus uses us as campus witnesses in the midst of a hostile environment, so that the young People come to insight, repent and become 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." Jesus' works are the second testimony for Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus even says that this testimony of the works is even bigger. What were the works that Jesus did? We have listed some of his works in John 2 to 5: At the wedding in Cana he had

water in wine transformed. In Sychar, Samaria, he had opened the heart of a bitter woman let living water flow in her soul. Back in Galilee, he had brought the terminally ill Son of a royal official healed by the faith of his father. And in Jerusalem he had healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years and had given him helped me get up and go. 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 messianic works. The blind see, the lame lepers go, lepers get clean, deaf people hear, dead people rise. Witness the works of Jesus his authority from God and his identity as the Son of God.

These works could also be seen by the Jews. One of them was Nicodemus. He came to Jesus and confessed (John 3:2): " 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.'" But though they saw the works that bore witness to Jesus, they did not accept this testimony either. If they had accepted the testimony of the works they must also accept Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus says in Matthew 11:6: "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." To bear witness to the works of the Son of God to accept, one must acknowledge the one whom God has empowered.

This year we celebrate the forty years of God's work through obedience of faith of missionary Dr. Peter Chang and the dedication of his house church. Every year let us remember God's amazing works in these forty years that have made this ministry from a sermon in front of a flower pot to a spiritual headquarters. Through reports and testimonies, visits and stays and Participation in conferences and forums during these forty years has brought countless coworkers of UBF worldwide and many other churches the testimony of these

ministries seen, accepted and decided to cooperate cordially.

In 2011 the Global Leadership Empowerment began with the conference in Gemünd with the Title "Young Leaders transforming the World." In recent years, God has been working through this ministry of faith, as the leaders of the next generation of UBF repented with tears, took a serious look at the Word of God and began to work as self-motivated Bible teachers. The younger ones of them work with through early prayer, the Factual Study, the prayer circles in the schools. Many servants and maids of God and parents came and saw this work, recognized it as Testifying to the authority of the servant of God and praising God. They were like the Born blind in John 9, who rejoiced with the Pharisees over Jesus, confessed: "Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." Even without the authority of God, it was impossible to turn young people to bring obedience of faith, but it has actually happened and is happening among us still. The works of God cannot all be reported here and meanwhile fill already a book. Like Jesus, God's people can proudly say: "The works that I do, testify of me that the Father has sent me."

Others saw the same works and heard the same testimonies, but they denied them and denied that God was at work here through his servants. They even started to persecute God's work and slander God's servants. Jesus admonished the Jews in verses 37 and 38, referring 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 testimony of works and the testimony of God from their pride and hardened hearts. God's Word did not dwell in them. God's word dwells in those who repent change the rule in their life. They can also accept the testimony of the works and rejoice.

The miracles that we have witnessed over the past forty years through obedience of faith and the devotion of the house church of the servant of God, the house churches of native shepherds and the leaders of the next generation, are God's own work. This year, let us celebrate the 40th anniversary together with all those in whom God's word dwells. We celebrate the 40th anniversary with all our hearts with the vision that God will do even greater works: The restoration of Germany as a shepherd nation and of Europe as a missionaries sending continent, the mobilization of the next generation as global spiritual leaders and the establishment of three mission bases in the Muslim countries.

In this passage we have learned that Jesus is the Son of God. John, the works and God himself bear clear witness to him. If, in spite of the many testimonies, we still have hatred and rebellion against God's servants and His Word and God Himself in our heart that devour us from within, we must repent and accept the change of rule. 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 Service with all our heart.

## **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 their Bible study. The Scripture is the fourth witness for Jesus as the Son of God. The Jews were apparently experts in Bible study. With the Pharisees it was part of their training to know the Scriptures very well. They learned the five books of Moses by heart, as well as the prophets and psalms, Proverbs and history books. Among them were also the scribes who had special knowledge of the Bible. But there was something wrong about their Bible study. Jesus says that they missed the most important point of Scripture, namely Jesus

himself. They sought 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 didn't study the Bible to come to the knowledge of the truth and to obey God, but in order to be able to justify their 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 unity of the Scriptures apart. Thus they accused the healed man in John 5 of working on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10b), but omitted 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, all 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 by His almighty Word out of nothing. In Genesis 3 we find the disobedience of mankind as the cause of sin. Genesis 12 tells of Abraham, whom God called to make him 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 rebirth through the holy seed. In Jesus, then, all the 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 to His Great Commission. The

Bible does not tell stories randomly strung together, but tells God's story of the One who, through the obedience of the One, restores the lost paradise and redeems His people, to use them as a kingdom of priests and holy nation for the whole world.

Our Bible study 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, as with the Jews, only self-deception and an alibi for continuing our own lives according to sinful desires. However, through intensive, sincere Bible study we may recognize 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 together 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 then 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 Mueller, who began a life of complete dependence on God and, through his work among the orphans in Bristol, wrote faith history for the glory of God.

Dr. Samuel Lee studied the Bible through the Daily Bread for eight years from Genesis to Revelation, 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. He then taught God's hope with the prayerful message "A Kingdom of Priests

and a Holy Nation". In his pastoral life he learned that many Bible students were only interested in getting something. When it came to commitment and carrying the cross of mission, 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 disciples of Jesus, shepherds and Bible teachers all over the world were raised.

These stories of faith began with 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 follow consequently. In a time when even many theologians and pastors relativized God's Word, God used them as influential preachers of righteousness.

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 idea is ridiculous. Rather, they assumed through Bible study that their life in Jesus might be a sacrifice pleasing to God. Here we learn that fruitful Bible study must always be intensive and serious. That is why we do not only hear a word on Sundays how we drink a glass of cola, but study the Bible by observing, interpreting and applying it carefully and struggle by writing testimony to personally accept and obey God's word. 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 study to help them to meet Jesus, the Son of God, to grow as obedient disciples who are used to teach the obedience of faith.

Last year we were allowed to study the five books of Moses and were able to recognize the life of Jesus and learn about life as God's holy people and as the kingdom of priests. This year God gives us grace to study Nehemiah and the history and prophetic

books before, during and after the Babylonian captivity, which testify of 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 and obey Him unreservedly and with devotion in Bible studies in preparation for the conferences and in one-to-one Bible study teams, so that we do not remain useless people but grow into global spiritual leaders.

Then why was the Bible study of the Pharisees and scribes so superficial and false, leading them to miss the core of the Bible? It was because they were seeking their own honor. They lived 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 ministry and requires complete self-denial and dedication to the end. But it is a great honor with God. All the 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 in which they put their hope became their judge. God's Word itself was directed 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 testimonies for the Son of God, we, as those empowered by God, are allowed to work for His redemptive work, 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 faithful obedience of a person. May God bless our Bible research and forming 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.