

# That You May Continue to Believe...



## AN Exposition of the gospel of John

### Jesus Answers the Charge of Sabbath Breaking...John 5:19-47

I was once called to give a deposition in a lawsuit. I was, in fact, called as a religious expert and as a member of the management of the company being sued. As I was being deposed, I was asked this question, **“Are you Reformed?”**

To which I answered, **“Yes, I am a Protestant.”**

The lawyer who was questioning me looked at me with the strangest look as if he were asking, “What does that have to do with the question I just asked?” So he asked me again, **“Well, Mr. Browning, perhaps, you did not hear the question properly. What I asked was ‘Are you Reformed?’”**

I answered, **“Yes, I am a Protestant.”**

Then he asked me, and lawyers do not like to this, whether I would mind explaining what I meant by my answer.

**“Yes, I would be happy to,” I replied. “In the sixteenth century there was a rather heated theological debate between Luther, Calvin and their followers and the Roman Catholic Church over the nature of justification. The little soirée that that debate produced turned into something known historically as the Protestant Reformation. So when you ask if I am Reformed, I am happy to answer that I am a Protestant. Is that what you wanted to know?”**

He didn’t know how to respond to that. So he asked me the next question, which is where he really wanted to go in the first place. He was trying to make the point that a person cannot be reformed and abide with Charismatics. So he asked me the next question, **“Well then, are you Charismatic?”**

I answered, **“Yes, I am.”**

He didn’t know how to respond to that either. So he asked me again, **“You’re Charismatic?”**

And I said, **“Yes.”**

**“You’re Charismatic?”**

**“Yes.”**

**“You’re Charismatic?”**

**“Yes, I am.”**

**"Would you mind...explaining that?" he asked.**

**"Well," I said, "most people like me. I'm friendly and outgoing. Some people say I have a measure of personal magnetism. A lot of people seem to enjoy talking to me. Some even find me winsome"**

**"Oh, that's not what I meant!" he said.**

**"No?"**

**"No! What I meant was are you Charismatic theologically?"**

**"Ah" I replied. "Yes."**

**"You're Charismatic theologically?" he stammered.**

To which my lawyer finally answered, **"Let the record show that my client has thus far answered this question six times in the affirmative."**

To which the questioning lawyer added, **"O.K. then, tell me what you mean by yes."**

**"Sure!" I replied. "The word 'charismatic' is based on the Greek word χάρισμα or χάρις and its most normal usage refers to a "kindness" or "gift." The Scripture says in Ephesians 4:7-8 that Christ has apportioned to each one of His followers some spiritual gift. It says further that these gifts were**

**apportioned out to the church when He ascended on high. Since I am a Christian and since I believe He has given out gifts, I am pretty sure I am a Charismatic. Does that answer your question?"**

**"Oh!" he winced. "Alright then I see where you are going. But that is not what I meant at all. What I meant was, 'Do you speak in tongues?'"**

I waited for a moment and then answered, **"Yes."**

He looked at me completely bewildered and asked again, **"You speak in tongues?"**

**"Yes."**

**You're telling me you speak in tongues?"**

**"Yes." I replied.**

**"Alright. What do you mean by that?"**

**"Well, I've memorized a few Hebrew Scriptures and sometimes I say them. I know quite a bit of Greek but when I really get vexed I almost always resort to Latin. Hence, I speak in tongues."**

**"Ah, Mr. Browning I think that will be all."**

Now, I told you that story not because I am particularly clever. I am not. I am pretty much a dullard. I think it could even be argued that my answers were mean spirited. But I wanted to tell you that story because it a pretty good illustration of an interview not going the way it was intended. In my story, the young lawyer wanted to go one place and I, the so-called religious, theological expert, wanted to go some place else. There is something very much like that going on in the passage before us this morning. You see the Scribes and the Pharisees were sorely vexed at Jesus. You have to keep that in mind or this discourse before us this morning loses all its tension.

At the beginning of John 5, Jesus visited the famous Pool of Bethesda just north of the temple compound. It was an enormous place about the size of football field divided into two large swimming pools cut into solid rock. The pools collected rainwater and runoff from the northern part of the city but were also apparently supplied from occasional springs that bubbled up through cracks in the rocks. Ancient sources tell us that the water in one of the pools was scarlet in color, which would indicate the presence of an iron-laden spring.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, Jesus visited the pools and strolled through the covered colonnades that divided up the two pools looking at the masses that had gathered there in hope of finding cures for their ailments. There He picked out a man that had been an invalid for thirty-eight years and having compassion on him healed him. Now what is interesting about the healing and especially the way John describes it is that he waits until Jesus had told the man to take up his bed and walk to tell us that Jesus had healed him on a Sabbath. **You see, that's the heart of the story.** That is the point John is trying to get across. Jesus did what He did on the Sabbath.

You will remember from last week that the healing of the man at the pool sparked the indignation of the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem. They were indignant not because Jesus healed the man, though later they would be offended by whatever Jesus did, but rather they were offended because He had ordered this man to carry his bed on the Sabbath. We spent some time last week talking about their view of the Sabbath and the rigorous manner in which they enforced it observation.

Anyway, when they learned that it was Jesus who had healed the man the text says they began to persecute Him. Now, it is not clear what that meant. It may have been verbal; it may have even been physical. But apparently they stayed at it. The text uses the continuous tense in past time to indicate the relentless nature of their anger toward Jesus. They just kept on nipping at his heels. Finally, Jesus responded to them by saying...<sup>2</sup>

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:17...Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."**

Now you will remember from our discussion last week that the Jews had even discussed between themselves the possibility, and I say this reverently, that perhaps God Himself was a Sabbath-breaker. Of course, it sounds blasphemous when we say that but think about it. Didn't the sun come up on the Sabbath? Didn't the stars come out on the Sabbath? Didn't the wind blow on the Sabbath? Didn't storms move in and drop precious rain on dry ground on the Sabbath? Weren't babies born sometimes on the Sabbath? Didn't people sometimes die on the Sabbath? Surely that means that God in heaven was at work on the Sabbath! Of course, the Jews came up with that wonderful little ditty that we talked about last week, **"A man is able to do whatsoever he pleases in his own courtyard**

**and since the whole world is the courtyard of God, He can do whatever He pleases.”** I love that.

It was Jesus statement that He was working just as the Father was working that really made them angry. The text says they even wanted to kill Him. Now can you imagine wanting to kill a man over words? Can you imagine killing a man whose only crime was to heal a man paralyzed for thirty-eight years?<sup>3</sup> They wanted to kill Him because He had said, **“You are healed, get up, pick up your bed and go.”** Now the reason they wanted to kill Him was two-fold. First, they wanted to kill Him because He was breaking the Sabbath (vs. 18) and secondly, they wanted to kill Him because they felt that when He called God His Father He was claiming equality with God.<sup>4</sup>

Now before we look at today’s text, I want to make just two quick points. You will remember that I have said in past lessons that John has an affinity for words that can more than one meaning. We saw it in the Nicodemus story in chapter 3 where Jesus told Nicodemus that a man had to be born ἀνωθεν (anōthen) which could mean either **“again”** or **“from above.”** When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus He told Nicodemus that every man had to be born **“anothen”** or else he could not even see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus took it to mean that a man had to be born **“again”** which is why he brought up the issue of entering again into his mother’s womb. Jesus, on the other hand, clearly meant that a man had to be born **“from above.”** I bring that point up because the word than John chooses to use for **“breaking”** the Sabbath also had two different meanings.<sup>5</sup> This might even be profitable for you to write down in your Bible. It is the word λυω (luō) in Greek. It is one of the first words you learn when you study New Testament Greek and start memorizing the various conjugations of different verb

forms. It can mean either “to break” or “**destroy**” or it can mean “to loose” or “**unbind.**” Let me read a passage where it is used in the second sense in...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Acts 22:30**...The next day, since the commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released (λυω) him and ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble.

It is also used in this second sense in the Gospel of John...

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 1:27**...**"He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. (λυω)"**

Now it might be possible to make a case that John used the word that he did in order to create deliberate confusion. I don't think that's the case but it is possible. I think rather John used the word precisely because it had two meanings and he wanted to demonstrate the difference in how the Jews and Jesus understood things. On the one hand, he could have the Jews arguing that Jesus was “**breaking the Sabbath.**” While, on the other hand, he could have the disciples arguing in response that Jesus was actually “**setting the Sabbath free.**”

Now secondly, Jesus was in fact making the claim of deity. He does that several times in John and only a careful, purposed misreading of the text would allow a person to say any thing other than that was what He intended. However, He never claimed deity in isolation from the Father or in independence from the Father. He never meant, “**I am God completely separated and on my own from this God of Israel.**” You will see that come up as a central issue in His response to the accusation of the Jewish leaders.

Finally, I need to tell you that this whole section, verses 19-47, reads like a courtroom testimony. My wife and I particularly like shows like the *New Detectives* or *Forensic Files* or *American Justice*. We sometimes watch them late at night and argue about who committed the crime and whether or not the evidence points to such and such a person and, of course, my wife is always right. Even when she is wrong she is right. We love those shows and we even love the language associated with giving testimony and expert witness. And there is a lot of that in these verses that we are going to look at this morning. The whole section is a direct quote of Jesus' response to and indictment of the Jewish leaders who were persecuting Him. In the section Jesus uses words that are like the words of a witness. He uses "you" like He is pointing to someone. Actually the word is the plural form of "you" and He uses it 15 times. He uses the word "I" 23 times. He uses the word "myself" 4 times and He uses the words "that one", the demonstrative pronoun, 8 times

One other thing you ought to notice that in verses 19-29 Jesus refers to Himself as the Son.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:19...Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. "**

Do you see what I mean? He is talking about Himself in the third person. Starting in verse 30, He changes the third person reference to the first person. That is, starting in verse 30 He calls Himself "I" instead of the "Son."

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:30..."By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. "**

So in verse 19-29, He calls Himself the Son and in verse 30 to the end of the chapter He switches and calls Himself I. Do you see that? All right, let's look at the first section, verses 19-30. There are two things I want you to see here. He is going to say, **"I have a special relationship to the Father because He shows me everything."** Then He is going to say, **"This relationship is so special that He has given over to Me the power or right to judge the world."**

Now, I want you to think about how that hit the Jews. Imagine, if I were to stand up before you and to make the claim this morning and say, **"You know God and I have a special relationship and in the judgment all of you will have to stand before me."** Doesn't that sort of make your skin crawl to hear someone say, **"The judgment of the world has been entrusted to me."** That is exactly what Jesus says. You can see how powerful that must have been.

Now, look at verse 19, he is going to talk about His relationship with the Father.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:19...Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing..."**

My mother used to tell this story on me about something I did as a little boy. It really used to irritate me but as I've grown older it is less painful. Anyway she used to tell this story that when I was about three my dad once came home and was doing some work around the house and something happened that really upset him and he came into the house, stomping his feet, and cussed and threw something down on the floor. Now, I was three years old and really loved and admired my dad. So, I just stood there and watched him and when he finished I decided to emulate his tirade. I walked over to the coffee table and picked up a little potted plant and yelled out the exact same cuss words I had heard my dad

say and threw the pot down on the floor. Of course, that got my dad's attention and he stopped what he was doing and turned and looked at me and my mother eased beside him and said in a way that only she could do, **"He's your son."** Of course, my dad proceeded to explain to me in a very old-fashioned way that there are some actions that sons are not to emulate.

Here's what Jesus is saying, **"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing..."**

He does what His Father does...

Notice what he says at the end of the verse, **"because whatever the Father does the Son also does."**

Now, I want to teach you some Greek this morning, just two words. The first word is **"gar"**. It's easy to remember, just three little letters...g-a-r. In Greek, it means **"because"** or **"for"**.<sup>6</sup> The next word is **"hina"**. It is actually three letters in Greek but to pronounce it right takes four letters in English...h-i-n-a. It means **"with the following result or purpose"**.<sup>7</sup> The first word is **"gar"** and it means **"because"** or **"for"**. The second word is **"hina"** and it means **"with the following purpose or result"**.<sup>8</sup>

Now let me read verses 19-20 and put in the **"gar"** so you can see it in the text.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:19...**Jesus gave them this answer: **"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, (γὰρ) because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (γὰρ) <sup>20</sup> because the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. "**

The Son does what the Father does and why is that? It is because the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything. The other night we had a youth care group and we did something we have never done before. We had a karaoke machine. The Busters kindly loaned us their Karaoke machine and I have to tell you it was an ugly thing in a cute sort of way. But one of the things I really enjoyed and one of the things that was a really pleasant surprise was that Courtney Buster stood up and sang a song. She was wonderful and I promise you it was like watching Randy Buster all over again. The mannerisms, the style, the inflection were all his. It was Randy Buster all over again only good-looking and a girl. She was just like him and it reminded me of this verse. Children do what their parents do and why is that? It is because their parents love them and show them everything.

But another way to look at this is to see it as a master craftsman and his apprentice. Put this picture in your mind. See a man working in a shop with his beloved son building a piece of furniture. See a father teaching his son the trade that he had learned from his father and from his father before. See them putting furniture together, fashioning joints and connecting them and sanding them and finishing them together. I want you to see the father saying, **“See my son how this fits together and how this changes that and how this makes it strong and how this makes it beautiful.”**

That’s the picture. It is like an apprentice. Can you see that? And what Jesus is saying here is this, **“The Father shows Me everything and I do what He does because He shows Me everything and the reason He does that is because...He ...loves...Me.”**

That’s the picture. That’s Jesus’ response.

So they are saying, **“How can you say you are His son? How can you do that? How can you do that? Doesn’t that mean you are saying you’re equal with God?”** And Jesus replies, **“He loves Me. I am His Son. He shows Me everything He is doing and He does that because He loves Me.”**

And then I want you to look at the word **“hina”** I was telling you about. It comes up right here and the NIV does a terrible job translating it. Let me read it to you in the NIV here.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:20...** Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

That’s a terrible translation and it loses all the force of the **“hina”**. It should be something like this.

**“He will show Him even greater things that what He has so far (hina) with the purpose or result that you be amazed.”**

He could have said it this way, **“That’s why He is doing what He is doing. He is doing what He is doing because He wants to confound you.”**

Can you imagine that? Why was God showing Jesus the things that He is? He was showing Him what He did so that when people look on Jesus actions they would say, **“What! That is incredible!”** And that is exactly what happened. You will remember that the Scriptures are replete with places where it says things like, **“And they were amazed at His teaching”** or, **“They marveled at His words”** or **“No man ever talked like this man.”**

God showed Jesus everything He did and He did so because He loved Him and He did so to the end that the people that were watching would be absolutely astonished.

Now look at verse 21, there is another “gar”. Remember that means “because”.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:21...** (γάρ) **Because just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. "**

Now, in the Old Testament God is presented as the only being who could raise the dead. The Jewish community fully accepted that God could and did raise the dead. Of course, there are a couple of places in the Old Testament where God empowered someone to raise somebody else from the dead. I am thinking principally of Elijah and son of the widow of Zarephath.

<sup>NIV</sup> **1 Kings 17:21...** Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!" <sup>22</sup> The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. <sup>23</sup> Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" <sup>24</sup> Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth."

There are other places like that and, of course, God is always ultimately given the credit for that. What it says here is that the Son gives life just as the Father gives life. But the order is the Father first and then the Son. Because the Father gives life, the Son gives life.

Now think about that.

The Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He does.

The Father gives life and shows that to the Son and the Son gives life.

Just as the Father can raise someone from the dead so the Son also gives life. Now what picture enters your mind? Remember, we are in the book of John. What scene is the author foreshadowing? What scene is He pointing to? Of course, it is the picture of Lazarus. That chapter is the great climax of the first half of the book of John and that is where this pointing. It is the great climactic miracle in which Jesus says, **“Come out!”** and Lazarus comes out of the tomb.

How can Jesus do that? He can do that because His Father shows Him everything. The Father loves Jesus and the Father gives life so Jesus also gives life. The Father raises the dead so Jesus raises the dead. Now here it may mean and I think the emphasis is in fact on the spiritual aspect of life giving. Just like God can raise a dead man, Jesus can raise a man who is dead spiritually, a man who is dead on the inside and has no inclination toward the things of God. Jesus can say to that man **“Come out, come out!”** and that man will come out.

Now there is another **“gar”**.

**NIV John 5:22...“(γάρ) Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,”**

Now here the **“gar”** is translated **“moreover”** and again the NIV has hidden the force of the **“gar.”** Think of it this way, **“...Because the Father judges no one, but has entrusted...”** The Father has given Jesus the power to give life and that is connected to the fact that He has given over to Jesus the judgment of the world.

That is an extraordinary statement. He is saying, **“All judgment of the world and of mankind has been given over to me.”** Now the next verse starts with a **“hina”** and gives the purpose or result for giving all judgment over to Jesus.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:23...“(ὅτι) with the purpose or result that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”**

Jesus is looking these Jewish persecutors right in the eye and saying to them, **“God has given all judgment to Me as His Son; He has given all judgment to Me. I have the gift of life. He has given over the judgment of the world to me and He has done that so that everyone will honor Me.”**

Now think about to whom He said that. He said that those who were persecuting Him, those that were following along nipping at His heels or being perhaps being physically abusive to Him. He turned around and said to them, **“The reason the Father shows me everything, the reason He authorizes Me to give life, the reason He has given the judgment of the world over to Me is so that everyone, everywhere will honor Me just as they do the Father.”**

What an extraordinary thing to say. It is an amazing passage. Now look at verse 24. Again it returns to the language associated with the courtroom.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:24...“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. ”**

Now, let me give you one final Greek lesson. There are two different tenses being used here. One tense is the present tense and stresses the idea of continuous

action in the present time. The other tense used is the perfect tense and the idea it conveys is that the action has been completed in the past with consequences that are visible in the present.

Let me illustrate it. In the past water leaked on the floor joists in my bathroom and now the joists are all rotten. The water leaked in the past but the consequences of the water leaking are present right now. It leaked (emphasis on the past) but the joists are (emphasis on the present) rotten. Now follow along with as I read the same verse again supplying the emphasis of the verbs.

<sup>NIV</sup> **John 5:24...**"I tell you the truth, whoever hears (present tense "is hearing") my word and believes (present tense "is believing") him who sent me has (present tense that is right now) eternal life and is not being condemned (present middle); he has crossed over (perfect tense indicating past action with present consequences) from death to life.

Faith is like switch. It is on or off. There is no issue here of enough faith or a high enough quality of faith. It either is or is not. When people say, "I don't know if I have enough faith," it is because they misunderstand the nature of belief. It is a switch. You either have or you don't.

Jesus' point here is that anyone who believes in Him has eternal life. Here's how all that is connected.

The Father loves me and shows Me all He is doing.

He has given to Me the authority to give life just as He gives life.

He has entrusted to me the judgment of the world.

He has done that everyone may honor the Son as they honor Him.

Whoever believes in Me has eternal life...whoever doesn't believe in Me doesn't have life.

Do you see the flow of His argument? Look at verse 25.

**NIV John 5:25... "I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."**

The picture is again the picture of Lazarus. Lazarus is lying in a tomb dead and rotting and Jesus says, **"Come out!"** and Lazarus hears His voice and comes out unto life. But the same is true spiritually. A person who hears the voice of Jesus and responds to Him in faith has passed over from the realm of death into the realm of life. That's the point He is making. Look at verse 26. It starts with another **"gar"**.

**NIV John 5:26... (γάρ)** Because as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

This verse is the focal point of the chiasm in this passage. It is the main point Jesus is making in these verse 10 verses. Now look at verse 28. The verse is interesting because Jesus relates it back to something He had said earlier. You remember He said, **"God has done all this with the purpose or result that you be amazed."** Here He tells them not to be amazed.

**NIV John 5:28... "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out—"**

It is the picture of Lazarus but it is also the picture of every person who dies having faith in Jesus. Now look at the rest of verse 29. It is a little troublesome.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:29... "and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. "**

So here's the question. Is He now saying that in the judgment life is based upon merit? That is, is life based upon my good works? Is it based on the evil works that we do? What does it mean to do good? In John 6, Jesus is going to give us the answer. There the conversation goes like this...

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 6:27..."Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." <sup>28</sup> Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."**

That is the culmination of all of the discourses leading up to it. There He is saying, **"If you have faith in Me you will have met the requirement that God will demand in the day of the resurrection."**

Now verse 30 finishes off this first section where He says.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:30... "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. "**

Just as the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything so the Son watches the Father and seeks to emulate Him exactly. He wants to do things in exactly the same way as the Father.

Now in verse 31-47, Jesus is going to switch gears. He is going to talk about those things that witness to Him. He is going to talk about those things that witness to His truthfulness and this is important because you will remember accusations

have been pointed His way. They charged Him with unlawfully breaking the Sabbath and with unjustly making Himself to be equal with God. So, He is saying here let me produce my witnesses and let's see how they stack up. That's what is going to happen in verses 31-37

**NIV John 5:31... "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. "**

Now where does that logic come from?<sup>9</sup> Of course, it comes from the Old Testament and the requirement that any charges against a person must be substantiated by two witnesses. Jesus is saying His claims ought to have more than one witness. He is saying that one witness would not be enough to prove His point. But He is also going to say that He has more than one witness.<sup>10</sup>

**NIV John 5:32... "There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. "**

Now who is that other witness? Or is there more than one witness?<sup>11</sup> Look what He says in verse 33.

**NIV John 5:33... "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. 34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it (ἵνα) with the purpose that you might be saved. "**

Here's what He says, **"John testified about Me and was right but I don't accept human testimony."** What an extraordinary thing to say. Why would Jesus not accept human testimony? The reason He does not accept human testimony is because there is better testimony out there.<sup>12</sup> Look what he says in verse 35.

**NIV John 5:35... "John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. 36 I have testimony weightier than that of John. "**

He is saying, **“John testified about me and he was truthful and right but I have better testimony than him.”**

Now, what is that testimony? It is right there in the rest of verse 36.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:36...” (γὰρ) For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. ”**

What is He saying is His principal witness? He is saying that the work He does is the principal witness that the Father has sent Him. He is saying, “It is the stuff I do.” He is saying, **“Think of all the people that have walked through the colonnade of the Pool of Bethesda and ever said to anyone paralyzed for thirty-eight years, ‘Get up, pick up your bed and go!’ How many others have done that? No one has ever done that. Does that not mean anything to you? Does that work not testify to the reality of who I am?”**

That is what He is saying. He is saying, **“The first witness is the stuff I do. The deeds that I do witness about Me. But I have other witnesses.”**

Look at verse 37.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:37...”And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, <sup>38</sup> nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. ”**

What He is saying here is this, **“The Father is also witnessing about Me. He does that in that He shows Me everything He does. He empowers Me to give life and demonstrates His love toward Me in showing ME all that He does.”**

Do you see that? Witness number 1 is the work He does. Witness number 2 is the Father Himself, Who loves and empowers Jesus to do the works He does. Verse 39 contains the third witness to Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

**NIV John 5:39... "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me (ἵνα) with the purpose or result that you might have life. "**

Basically He is saying, **"Because you refuse to come to Me to have life you have the opposite of life, that is you have death."** He is saying, **"There are three things that testify about Me. They are My works, the Father Himself and the cumulative witness of the whole of Scripture."**<sup>14</sup> Of course that reminds us immediately of that passage in Luke where Jesus meets the travelers on the road to Emmaus.

**NIV Luke 24:27...And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**<sup>15</sup>

Now, Jesus is making the point that the Scriptures themselves, the whole great cumulative weight of the Old Testament testify to the reality of Who He is and what He is doing.<sup>16</sup> Now look at verse 41.

**NIV John 5:41..."I do not accept praise from men, <sup>42</sup> but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. <sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> <sup>44</sup> 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?"**

Here's what He is saying, **"You don't love God. You make a big issue out of loving God but you don't really love Him. Do you want to know how I know**

**that you don't love God? You don't love the works that I do. And what is it that I do? I do the stuff that the Father shows Me. I only do what He shows Me and I do everything that HE shows Me. And you hate what I do. What does tell you? It tells you that you do not love God or else you would love the works that I do. God Himself has testified about ME and yet you don't love Me. What does that tell you? It tells you that you don't love God. Even the Scriptures testify about Me and you don't believe the Scriptures. Now, why is that? It is because you don't love God."**

Do you see what He has done? He has taken His defense and turned it around and pointed it at them. He is saying, **"The Father loves Me. I see everything He does and I do what He shows Me. I only do what He shows Me and He shows Me everything he is doing because He loves Me. If you loved the Father, you would love Me because I do what the father shows Me."**

Now verse 45 contains Jesus' devastating conclusion.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:45..."But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. (γὰρ) "**

What's His point? His point is this, **"God wrote the Scripture and gave the law through Moses whom you make your claim to and Moses is there pointing to Me. He is standing there saying, 'That's the Son, believe in Him' and you won't do it."**

That's the point He is making and His conclusion is that...

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 5:46... "(γα̐ρ) If you believed Moses, you would believe me, (γα̐ρ) for he wrote about me. <sup>47</sup> But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"**

It is a devastating accusation. They start off accusing Him of Sabbath-breaking and of claiming equality with God and He turns their unbelief on them.<sup>18</sup> He takes them through this argument...

**"I do what the Father shows Me.**

**The Father loves Me and shows Me everything He is doing.**

**I only do what the Father shows Me.**

**The Father has given Me authority to give life and to judge the world.**

**He has given Me that authority in order that everyone everywhere might honor Me as they do the Father.**

**But you will not come to me and by dishonoring Me you dishonor Him.**

**You are accused not by Me but by Moses who witnessed about Me and you will stand before Me one day and I will pass judgment on you even as I am doing now."**

That's it. That's the great discourse following the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. It was a witness to them then and it is a witness to us today. We are here today because we love God and because we see the beauty of Jesus as a revelation of the love of God. But I suspect that there are people who come into our midst occasionally, perhaps even today, to whom Jesus is no more real than say the Easter Bunny. They have no reality to their faith. They come because it is a habit, a good social custom, and an aid to morality. They come because it is a place to meet other people, to extend and receive fellowship. But the truth of the

matter is that it is not really about us. It is about Him. We come to worship and focus our attention on Him because of what HE has done for us. Today, I beg you accept the testimony of the works of Jesus. Accept the testimony of the Father who sent Him.<sup>19</sup> Accept the testimony of the cumulative weight of Scripture and come to Him that you might have eternal life. Here's His promise.

**<sup>NIV</sup> John 6:37... "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. "**

**<sup>NAS</sup> Romans 10:11... For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."**

---

<sup>1</sup> See Lesson 9 and the description of the Pool at Bethesda.

<sup>2</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Notes and Commentary on the Greek Text*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 214. "The occasion of this discourse is the miracle of 5:2–9, the Jewish objection to what Jesus had done and commanded on the Sabbath, and the reply of Jesus, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," which was rightly understood by the Jews as a claim to equality with God. It was imperative that John should handle this claim without further delay. Already (even if the Prologue be excluded) he had made extensive claims on behalf of Jesus. He is greater than John the Baptist; he is the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Son of man, the savior of the world. In the following chapters the great "I am" sayings occur: I am the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the way, the truth, the life, etc. in what sense are these divine claims made? Is Jesus a man who exalts himself to a position of divine authority? A demi-god, half human and half divine? Do his assertions imply any rivalry with the Creator, the God of Israel and the Old Testament?"

<sup>3</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *Gospel of John V.29* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 216. "When Jesus is accused of violating the Sabbath, the Synoptic tradition records two ways in which he defends himself: (a) **on humanitarian grounds**. Jesus argues that on a Sabbath a man may water an animal or pull it out of a hole; therefore why may he not do the greater good of healing a man (Luke xlii 15, xiv 5)? Something approaching this argument may be found in John vii 23: if a man may be circumcised on the Sabbath, why may not the whole man be made well on the Sabbath? (b) **on theological grounds**. In the Synoptic tradition Jesus argues that in the OT the priests of the Temple were allowed to do work on the Sabbath; yet now something greater than the Temple is present (Matt xii 5–6). "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (xii 8). This type of argument leads to a majestic claim by Jesus, and our present passage in John is quite similar."

<sup>4</sup> C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 320. "The transition from the narrative of the healing at Bethesda to the discourse which follows is made by way of a dialogue which arises with dramatic propriety out of the situation. At the close of the narrative we learn (v. 9 b) that the healing took place on a Sabbath, and this

provoked criticism from 'the Jews'. The motive is one which is prominent in the Synoptic Gospels, and was certainly deeply rooted in the tradition. John however has given it a new turn. Jesus claims that in healing (i.e. giving life) on the Sabbath He is doing what God is always doing. This puts the controversy at once on the highest theological level."

<sup>5</sup> Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 144. "Double Meaning: The Johannine device of double meaning is much like that of metaphor, and, in fact, the two are often confused. Yet the distinction can be made that while metaphor unites two conceptions, with one reality used figuratively to illumine another, double meaning presents two concrete meanings at once, both of which are true and crucially related—yet still distinct."

<sup>6</sup> Walter Bauer, (Rvd. By Arndt, Gingrich and Danker) *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 151..."conjunction used to express cause, inference, continuation, or to explain. Never comes first in a clause; usually second, but also third."

<sup>7</sup> William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 287. "ὤσα is almost always followed by the subjunctive and can indicate purpose."

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 376..."in final sense to denote purpose, aim or goal *in order that, that*."

<sup>9</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 318. "A testimonial to oneself is no testimonial No one can witness his own signature. If Jesus' claims were made without the Father authority, there would be no obligation on his hearers to accept them This argument was in fact brought against them by his opponents during a later visit to Jerusalem You are bearing testimony of yourself, your testimony is not true (John 8 13) But to this he could answer. "Even if I do bear testimony of myself my testimony is true" because it was confirmed by the Father's testimony (John 8:14, 18). This note of testimony or witness-bearing, first introduced in John 1.7, is a dominant one in this Gospel and forms the subject of the remainder of chapter 5."

<sup>10</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 1, 206. Hendriksen does a very good job explaining how Jesus was addressing the issue of "witness" in the vernacular of the people. By that, he means Jesus is saying something like this, "If I say something it is true. I will accommodate you by establishing other witnesses to corroborate my own testimony. I do not do this because there is any doubt that my words are true but rather because of the weakness of your faith and the hardness of your hearts."

<sup>11</sup> Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1984), 95. "The mysterious "another" been identified by some as the Baptist and by others as the Father. The parallelism, however, between the introduction (5:31-32) and the inclusion 5:45-47) strongly suggests that the "another" is Moses."

<sup>12</sup> Philip W. Comfort, & Wendell C. Hawley, *Opening the Gospel of John* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1994), 97. "According to the Jewish law, the testimony of one man is not a valid witness. Truth or

validity has to be established by two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Therefore, Jesus' self-witness would not validate his claims; he needed the witness of another. That other witness was not John the Baptist, but his Father (see 5:33-37 and comments). In the following verses, Jesus will draw upon several witnesses to affirm his claims, but actually he needs only one witness, His Father's."

<sup>13</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 286. "The thought of witness is prominent in this Gospel (see on 1:7). John insists that what he writes is well attested. Here he records some words of Jesus that stress the witness borne to him. Jesus speaks of a fivefold witness. Witness is borne to him by (i) the Father (vv. 32, 37); (ii) the Baptist (v. 33); (iii) his works (v. 36); (iv) Scripture (v. 39); and (v) Moses (v. 46). The Evangelist has earlier put some emphasis on the witness borne by John the Baptist. Here Jesus mentions this witness, but puts little stress on it. He is not interested in human witness of any kind (v. 34). He refers his hearers rather to the witness of his own works, and most of all, to that of the Father. He does not expect them to respond to this witness, for, although they profess a profound reverence for the Scriptures, they do not in their heart of hearts believe them. For this reason they do not accept the testimony that they afford to Jesus."

<sup>14</sup> Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel V.1* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1942), 303-304. "To the witness of John the Baptist and of the works of Jesus is now added the witness of the Father in the Old Testament Scriptures. The permanent importance of this third witness is emphasized in the Greek by an emphatic *He* and by the perfect tense—*He hath borne witness*. The Jews to whom Jesus and His disciples speak have no direct knowledge or vision of God; they neither hear His voice nor see His form, nor does His word abide in them. They do, however, possess the written Scriptures which are the witness of the Father to the Son; and these they persistently misunderstand, for they examine them on the false assumption—the Greek verb translated *ye think* (v. 39) is used several times elsewhere with this suggestion that the written words of Scripture are themselves life-giving. They therefore 'exercise themselves in a great and profitable occupation in a manner not becoming its use' (Cyril). Being the witness of God to His Son, the Scriptures are prophetic, not life-giving. Those who properly read and understand the words of the prophets of Israel are thereby led to believe in Jesus (vi. 45). Not to believe in Him, not to come to Him and follow Him, is to abandon life and to misunderstand the Scriptures altogether for they provide in and by themselves no final vision of God and no truly spiritual religion. Judaism is fundamentally a negation (x. 8); and when it turns itself into a positive religion, it destroys itself. Thus the pride of the Jews in their indefatigable study of the Scriptures is undermined at its source."

<sup>15</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 360. "What is the purpose of Scripture? According to Jesus Christ the purpose of Scripture is to point to Him and to reveal Him."

Boice also quotes Luther in a wonderful passage taken from: Martin Luther, *What Luther Says*, compiled by Ewald M. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), Vol. 1, 69-70. "Martin Luther is one who saw it clearly. In a sermon on this text preached only months before his death he argued, "Here Christ would indicate the principal reason why the Scripture was given by God. Men are to study and search in it and to learn that He, *He*, Mary's Son is the one who is able to give eternal life to

all who come to Him and believe on Him. Therefore he who would correctly and profitably read Scripture should see to it that he finds Christ in it; then he finds life eternal without fail. On the other hand, if I do not so study and understand Moses and the prophets as to find that Christ came from Heaven for the sake of my salvation, became man, suffered, died, was buried, rose and ascended to Heaven so that through Him I enjoy reconciliation with God, forgiveness of all my sins, grace, righteousness, and life eternal, then my reading in Scripture is of no help whatsoever to my salvation. I may, of course, become a learned man by reading and studying Scripture and may preach what I have acquired; yet all this would do me no good whatsoever. For if I do not know and do not find the Christ, neither do I find salvation and life eternal. In fact, I actually find bitter death; for our good God has decreed that no other name is given among men whereby they may be saved except the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12)."

<sup>16</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 266. "The reference is to a witness which was made in the past by the Father, which however's still valid in the present, namely the witness of the Scripture; for only that can be meant by the *λογος* of God in v. 38 (cp. 10.35). Yet in what sense is Scripture a witness? It cannot be a question of proof-texts in the traditional sense (I would not exclude proof-texts); for the Johannine Jesus never uses them; above all, it would completely destroy the idea of v. 36, if the appeal to Scripture was thought of as an appeal to a generally recognized authority, through whose good offices one might be led to accept the word of Jesus. V. 39 will show more clearly what is meant."

<sup>17</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 265. Carson is particularly brilliant here, "The chief punishment of the liar is not so much that he is not believed but that he does not believe; similarly, the chief judgment on those who deny that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, is not so much that they have no Messiah, but that they follow false messiahs:"

<sup>18</sup> Barrett, 225. "The Law, rightly used, should lead men not to unbelief but faith."

<sup>19</sup> John Calvin, *The Gospel According to John* (Sage Digital Library) 5:23. "Our duty, therefore, is to seek God the Father in Christ, to behold his power in Christ, and to worship him in Christ. For, as immediately follows, he who honoureth not the Son deprives God of the honor which is due to him. All admit that we ought to worship God, and this sentiment, which is natural to us, is deeply rooted in our hearts, so that no man dares absolutely to refuse to God the honor which is due to him; yet the minds of men lose themselves in going out of the way to seek God. Hence so many pretended deities, hence so many perverse modes of worship. We shall never, therefore, find the true God but in Christ, nor shall we ever worship Him aright but by kissing the Son, as David tells us, for, as John elsewhere declares, He who hath not the Son hath not the Father..."