

God's Own Testimonies

Today, we will again be studying through these words of Luke chapter 3, and here we will be considering the importance that we place on the testimonies of others. Because it is the testimonies given by other people that form the basis of most all of the things that we know and believe about the world around us. And over time, all those testimonies from those people have been written down for us in schoolbooks and we call that history.

And that is much the same with these precious words given within this Book, our Bible. These words are the testimonies of men, ordinary men, often, very little different from you or me, but with one thing added that make these words far more true and far more meaningful than any of our recorded secular history books.

The testimonies within this Book, our Bible, are the testimonies of God Himself. Yes, told through the voices and experiences of ordinary men, but still, the exact and infallible testimonies of God Himself. We are told that truth in 2 Timothy 3. Listen again to these familiar words!

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

All of these words in this Bible were “breathed out” of God’s own mouth and onto the pages of this Book, making these “testimonies” the most important and most trustworthy testimonies ever given. And these words never change as does so much of our secular written history, men and women of today “rewriting” history to fit their own bias or prejudice. Thankfully, no such thing takes place with these words. These words are “immutable”, the “rock solid” unchangeable truths of God.

And that is why, as we read these scriptures about the beginning days of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and about His messenger, John the Baptist, we must take these truths into our hearts and minds, and we must treasure their truth with everything we have within us.

Over the past few weeks, as we have studied about the ministry of John the Baptist, we’ve heard a voice that was strong and persuasive, declaring to the people that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, because the “Kingdom of God” was at hand.

And though many of those people listening were not fully able to understand the exact meaning of the prophecy John was preaching to them, they were still drawn in great numbers to be baptized by him.

And yes, the “Kingdom of God” was, at that very moment, surely already “at hand” and even present among them on this particular day as John was baptizing the people. And here, in these next few verses, that “Kingdom of God” would be revealed to them in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

And no, the “Kingdom of God” would not be immediately recognizable as a “Kingdom”, especially of the kind that these people were hoping to see. But even so, this very ordinary looking Man who was coming to be baptized by John was the very embodiment of that Kingdom.

And may I say in the strongest of words, this Man, Jesus, did not just represent the “Kingdom of God”. Jesus was, and He is, Himself, the “Kingdom of God”.

Listen to the way that God the Father “testifies” about His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, here in chapter 3 of the Book of Luke, beginning in verse 21.

²¹When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²²And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a (thundering) voice came from heaven (saying), “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22)

As I have pondered these words and considered the circumstances taking place leading up to this baptism of the Lord Jesus, my thoughts have gone to all the many “secular” commentators that I have read and heard over time, them commenting on their ideas and their beliefs concerning God. Many of which do acquiesce to the existence of God, or a god of some sort. But from there, their understandings and beliefs seem always to vary widely, and often go astray.

Sadly, many of those secular commentators probably grew up sitting in churches much like this one, Sunday after Sunday, listening to these very same words being preached. However, as they matured, such beliefs as the ones we’re studying about here lost their appeal to them, causing many of them to question most all of the “supernatural” events and miracles that surround them, finding ways to explain away such biblical events as this, the voice of God thundering out from the heavens saying, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”

Many of those secular commentators also question other events recorded within these scriptures, especially, anything “supernatural”, events such as those describing the way that God created us and our world. And they question the accounts of Noah and the great flood, and even the actual existence of Moses and his leading the Hebrew children out of Egypt, and especially, the parting of the Red Sea.

Most of those skeptical commentators seem unified in their beliefs that unless some real “scientific evidence” is presented to substantiate the testimonies given within the scriptures, then these biblical testimonies are not worthy of belief. Or, to put it another way, if the scripture cannot be proven out by science, then we should believe the testimony of science and not the testimony of God in these scriptures.

As believers, you and I are often offended by those scoffers, and to some degree, it is a right thing for us to do. But with humility, you and I must remember that we also have our own times of “unbelief”.

I mentioned in an earlier message that I can vividly recall a time in my own life, several years after I had become what I would call a very devout believer, that I went through a very difficult time of seriously questioning the truths of these scriptures. All sorts of thoughts filled my head, “Was Jesus ever a real person, “if He was, did His crucifixion, and especially His resurrection, really take place?”

My recovery from that ordeal came in a very simple way. I was brought back to the basics of truth when God's Spirit reminded me that every part of this Christianity of ours is based on one thing and one thing alone, and that is, the “Grace of God” who gives us “faith to believe”, not science, not evidence, not proof . . . just the “Grace of believing faith in Christ” and nothing else.

I had to come to the conclusion that if I am to accept these truths, these claims, these promises within these scriptures, then I would have to do it all from the springboard of “Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone”. And with that, God gave me peace about the whole matter.

So then, no, you and I will probably never be able to effectively debate the matters of God with the intellectuals of this world using the arguments of empirical scientific evidence. We can no more “explain” God to someone than we can explain the emotion of deep love that we have for our loved ones, our wife, our husband or our child, a love so deep that we would actually die for

them. Those are matters of the heart that are so individual to each person that no other person could grasp our true feelings. It is all truly unexplainable.

And so it is also with accepting and believing the existence and workings of God. Folks, God did not design His relationship with us in such a way as to allow it to be explained scientifically or in any other similar way. It truly is something that must be experienced to be believed. And that is done through "faith" alone.

And to make "faith" possible within our souls, God is very generous to those of us who do truly want to believe in Him. In the words of 1 Corinthians 2, that I have read to us so often,

⁹ . . . as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man, The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." ¹⁰But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.
(1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

To those of us who truly want to believe, God gives us clear and convincing "testimonies" of His presence, His majesty, His love and His grace. And as the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our hearts to Him, we will see those testimonies clearly, everywhere, all around us.

I'm reminded of a refrain throughout the scriptures, especially in the Psalms, that speak of the "testimonies of the Lord", those acts and deeds that God has done that can be clearly seen by those of us who have a heart to know Him and to trust Him.

From the stars in the heavens, to the circumstances of our daily lives, everything truly does "declare the glory of God", a generous provision to those of us who believe that "God truly is and that He is a rewarder of all who seek after Him!"

It is a sad thing that our unbelieving friends are unable to accept these truths that we read here today in the scriptures. They do seem to readily accept and believe other forms of historical writings. Few, if any of them, question or try to deny that George Washington actually existed. They say that they believe those accounts because of all of the "eyewitness" testimonies.

But eyewitness testimony is also true for these scriptures. These scriptures are filled to overflowing with eyewitness testimonies about the person and the wonders of God.

Beginning from the first words of this Book of Luke, we see testimony after testimony about the presence and the works of God. Granted, yes, these words do tell of “supernatural” events, a far stranger story than one we might normally encounter, as with historical accounts of former presidents like George Washington.

And again yes, this story truly is very different and mysterious. This story is about a Child being born to a virgin, and it's a story about men and angels declaring the newborn baby to be the coming Messiah who would save sinners from their sins.

And this is also a story about a strange man, John the Baptist, who dressed himself in camel's hair, and ate wild honey and locusts. And this strange story tells about the responses of men and women crying out in repentance for their sins, something you will never find in the historical writings recorded about George Washington.

But again, the difference is this thing that God has put within us that He calls “faith”. Believing faith is the essential element in our relationship with God.

Folks, the unbelieving, scoffing world would not admit it, but even their accepting and believing much of what is written in our secular history books requires a “form of faith”. And as I said at the beginning of the message today, “faith” is the one thing that is necessary for any of us to believe these words about Jesus, “faith”.

And again, all these words of scripture are testimonies, most of which are given to us by and through human writers. But far and above all of their testimonies is the testimony of someone far more trustworthy. These are the testimonies of God Himself, declaring to us that yes, He was doing, and causing to be done, all of the things written about in this bible, and especially about this One we are reading about today, His Dear and Beloved Son in whom He is well pleased.

And to add validation to these testimonies of God here in our scripture text for today, He purposefully does not present Himself in a veiled way as He often does, through nature or through our viewing of the stars in the heavens. This time God is absolutely direct. This time, He leaves no room for doubts or questions. This is truth in its purest form. His voice thunders out from heaven, speaking directly to us declaring and introducing His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, to us.

But again, here is where faith is a very necessary ingredient. None of this can truly be believed except through faith. And the deeper the faith, the more easily it is believed. There is no other way.

And folks, once a person does break through that barrier into “believing faith”, all of these testimonies really then start to fall into place and take on real meaning. And then, all that is left for us to do is to read, to examine and to enjoy the deeper truths of God. And that is what I would like for us to do this day and every other day that we meet together. These are precious words of truth, and you and I ought always to be searching them out.

These words of our scripture text for today are a dramatic and profound “testimony” given by God the Father, about His dearly beloved Son. And we need to ask, “What is it that God would like for us to learn and know about His Son? Those words again . . .

²¹When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²²And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22)

Here, as God introduces His Beloved Son to us, and puts His stamp of approval on His baptism, it is with the understanding that while this baptism might have looked like all the other people who were being baptized that day, this baptism was distinctly different. Other people were repenting and being baptized for the remission of their sins. But Jesus, having never sinned, had no sins to repent for and no need to be cleansed through baptism?

His baptism was necessary for several reasons, much of which had to do with His humanity. Jesus was born in human flesh, “under the Law of God”. And as a man in human flesh, He must willingly submit Himself to the laws that He Himself had given to govern the mankind that He had created. We read about that in Galatians chapter 4. Listen!

⁴. . . when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

Another of the reasons for Jesus' baptism having to do with His humanity, was that He knew that in His human condition, though He Himself was not sinful in His nature, or His conduct, or His behavior, His flesh was still corruptible, a holy and

righteous person living within the flesh of a corrupt human form. And in order to fulfill all of the righteous requirements of the law, Jesus knew that it was required of Him to go through the same cleansing baptism as did all other men and women.

And there were other reasons for His baptism. Jesus stood as a witness before all men, not only at that time, but also for all generations that would come afterwards. He had taken on the form of a man, and so he chose to humble Himself and be baptized as a man.

Another reason for the Baptism was to fulfill the requirement that all priests had to observe, that of ceremonial washing before entering into the Holy of Holies to do their duties as intercessor priests.

And no, Jesus did not truly need to do that. His own righteousness was sufficient, and He needed no cleansing. But again, His baptism was a demonstration, a testimony for all men, and especially all priests to see and to follow. Jesus was our "Great High Priest" who entered into the Holy of Holies by the strength and the power of His own perfect holiness.

This testimony from God involving Jesus' baptism was also important for another reason. It was God's opportunity to openly and profoundly declare to the people present then and also to all of us who would come afterwards that Jesus truly was and is the "beloved Son of God, in whom God is well pleased".

No one else in all of time and history would enjoy such a declaration. Jesus is the one and only begotten Son of God the Father. Yes, you and I get to be sons of God, as Jesus brings many sons to glory, but we are adopted sons and not true sons. Only Jesus had the very blood of God the Father coursing through His veins. And only about Him could it be said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

Lastly, these scriptures give us a testimony of God's willingness to come and live within us, to be our constant, continual and abiding helper. As the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, so also the Holy Spirit will descend upon all who believe in Him, you and me, and His Spirit will eternally abide within us.

Finally, may I say again that "testimonies" are God's way of openly declaring Himself to us. All we need to do is to look around us for only a moment and we can see the blessed testimony of His wonderful presence in everything that

exists. But folks, the very best testimony that God gives to us is within these precious “written words” within this bible. And you and I should be ever so eager to open its pages daily and to feast upon its sweet words of love.

And it is my prayer, this very day, and every day, that God’s Holy Spirit will descend upon each one of us, and that He will begin to fully reveal to us all of the treasures that He has written within these pages.

Listen as I close . . .

⁹ . . . as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man, The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” ¹⁰But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.
(1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

Let’s Pray!