

Prayer

Thank You, Jesus, for the joy of knowing You, for the pleasure of finding You in others, and the happiness we find in living our lives according to Your will. Remind us of this when we feel low, and place within us the assurance that even though our own love falters, Your love does not, and it lasts for eternity. Thank You Lord Jesus, AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Health

Pray for the management of hospitals in your country; the way they are run reflects national attitudes to health care. Pray for Christians who work and witness within hospitals.

On-going prayers

- *Pray about the tourism industry, its evils as well as its benefits*
- *Give glory to God for the seasons, the sun, the rain and the weather*
- *Pray about the issue of 'renewable' energy and its possible benefits*

Meditation

Lord Jesus, when dread silence descends upon our souls;
We call on You to fill the emptiness that comes to us unwanted

When something we have done for You goes wrong;
When the prayers we offer feel like groping in the dark;
When others we respect reject the work we do for You;
When sin raises its ugly head within us, when least expected;
When the enemy finds a way to hurt someone we love;
When situations unfold which compromise our faith;
When people we love and trust let us down badly;
When we let down badly those we love and trust;

We call on You, Lord Jesus, to fill our emptiness with Your Spirit;
Break the silence of our pain with Your eternal Word of Love.

Bible Study - 1 John 5:6-13

⁶ This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by the water alone but by the water and the blood; and the Spirit is the one that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ There are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement. ⁹ If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is surely greater; now this is the testimony of God that He has given about His Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony within. Whoever does not believe in God has made him a liar by not believing in the testimony God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Review

In yesterday's reading, we read John's glorious explanation of the blessing of the Christian life, which is to be victorious in the world through faith in Jesus, through being obedient to God, and through practical love for others. However, John faced people who objected to such a message because they did not believe that Jesus Christ was God; they said that however good He was and however dramatic His healing and effective His teaching, He was a man, and not God. In our reading today, John turns on such accusers and stoutly defends the divinity of Jesus.

Clearly, there are many who say the same today albeit for very different philosophical reasons. Because Jesus lived so long ago, most people are unwilling to accept that we can know 'facts' about Him, and therefore assign His life and death to the category of 'myth' rather than observable truth. Nevertheless, ancient opposition to Jesus' divinity drew out of John this explanation of the 'testimony', or truth of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.

John addressed this criticism head on by speaking about the three 'witnesses' to Jesus Christ; the water, the blood and the Spirit (5:6,7,8). What John says may seem rather strange to us however. What did he mean by these three, in particular the 'water' and the 'blood'; and secondly, what did it mean for John to speak about a unified testimony of these three and the 'testimony' of God (5:9)?

The passage begins by saying that Jesus 'came' by 'water' and 'blood', and each word is important. Jesus, of course, was the one announced by John as the 'one who is to come' (Matt 3:11), and in the last days of the Old Testament, the Messiah was described in this same way, as the 'coming one' (Ezekiel 24:26 etc.). Today, we might not notice the word 'came' in this sentence, but the way it is presented in Greek makes it clear that this was a claim that Jesus was God's Messiah.

The word 'water' could mean one of three things; either Jesus' natural birth (through the waters of the womb), His baptism by John at the beginning of His ministry (the waters of baptism), or, according to St Augustine, the water accompanied by blood that came from Jesus side when pierced on the Cross (see John 19:34). Of course, each one testifies to some unique aspect of Jesus humanity and divinity, and scholars have struggled to reach agreement about which one of these fits John's meaning here. If I have to pick one of these alone, then I suggest that testimony of the water refers to Jesus' natural birth. This is because in John 3, the Gospel reports Jesus as speaking about being born of water and the Spirit, and in this context, 'water' obviously means the water of natural birth. It also seems logical to me that the three witnesses are all different, and if the other two are the Spirit of God and the death of Christ (the blood), then this interpretation of the 'water' adds something quite different and distinct to the 'testimony' about Jesus.

There are many other details within this passage worth exploring, but this now gives us a better overall picture. The evidence of Jesus' humanity and divinity is found in His birth (water), His death (blood) and the Spirit of God; it is interesting that these three also connect with the three major festivals of the Christian faith; His birth (Christmas), His death (Good Friday and Easter), and the Spirit (Pentecost)! John goes on to say that the eternal truth or 'testimony' that Jesus is God's Son is something embedded within the true believer; it is a 'testimony within' (5:10). John goes further, to say that this testimony can be described in one other significant way. The true testimony of Jesus in the heart of the believer reveals eternal life through Jesus (5:11). In this way, John brings his letter around to the same point that concludes the Gospel of John (5:13).

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:34)

These two verses are not exactly the same but are remarkably close. They remain a primary source of inspiration for the faith and work of God's people throughout time.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Discuss how God's people testify to the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ today. How effective are we, and does this passage give us any clues about what we can do better?
2. This passage says that the testimony of the Spirit within is that we have eternal life. Is this true for Christians today? Do all believe in 'eternal life'?
3. Compare the two passages at the end of the study to see the similarities and the differences.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Scripture sometimes gives us some surprises, and here, John speaks about God's testimony in the life of the believer in surprising ways. What he says is clearly orthodox, but we have not heard it put like this elsewhere in scripture. The trio of 'water', 'blood', and 'Spirit' express deep spiritual truths about how God is known within the world; through the life of Jesus and His death, and through the Holy Spirit. This ending of John's letter makes me want to revisit a number of texts in John's Gospel to explore these three more fully; but one of the benefits of studying God's Word is that it takes us deeper into the revelation of God.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *What is the testimony of God within you? This sounds a difficult question, but in the light of our passage today, it is a question each of us should ask. What, in your life, gives you proof that God is who He is and that Jesus is your Saviour?*
- *Pray that God will increase His work of power in the midst of His people, and especially the Christian people you know and with whom you have fellowship. Pray for the church to be blessed with an outpouring of God's Spirit, testifying to the life of Christ and faith in Him who died for us and for our salvation.*

Final Prayer

Great Lord, the smile of Your face means everything to me; for You have granted me to see Your face, hear Your voice, feel Your touch and speak to You in faith; not with the perfection I will know in Heaven, but with sufficient reality to know for sure that You care, and all things are possible through You. Thank You, Lord, AMEN
