



“PROVE IT” John 5:31-47

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at JF Believers church
in Menomonie, Wisconsin
on February 7th, 2016

John 5:31-47 *"If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. 32 "There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. 33 "You have sent to John, and*

he has borne witness to the truth. 34 "Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. 35 "He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. 36 "But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. 37 "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. 38 "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. 41 "I do not receive honor from men. 42 "But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. 43 "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. 44 "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? 45 "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. 46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. 47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

During my summers as a kid, the TV stations where I lived in Iowa would play these old movies every weekday afternoon. So no matter how much we played outside from sun up to sun down, (and we did!) we would come in to watch the afternoon movie. It seemed that...at least in my memory, that most of those movies were old westerns. One of things that always seemed to happen in those classic westerns was the gunfight out on mainstreet. Somebody claiming to be the toughest would say some disparaging remark to some other guy, who would then kind of back up slowly with his hand on his gun while he muttered under his breath something along the lines of “*well partner...I think you're just gonna have to prove it.*” What he was saying was, “Do you have something in lead to back that up?”

And as fiction was manifest in real life, we kids tended to grow up making similar exaggerations about stuff, right? And we'd be all confident in our claims until one of the kids said, “Oh, ya? Prove it.” And then we'd be in a corner. We'd either have to prove it or be ‘outed’ as a fraud.

And now in ministry, when you're trying to share the gospel with someone, I get more of the same when they come back with something along the lines of “*well partner...I think you are just going to have to prove it!*” “Have Jesus prove Himself to me, or make some miracle happen and then I'll think about it.” Well, such a response didn't originate with us, for Jesus himself sometimes had the same problem with people in his time.

While some people legitimately are seeking, there always has been the guy who will never believe no matter the level of evidence, because he doesn't *want* to believe. He is the guy that just wants to fight out on mainstreet, and our ‘mainstreet’ today is the internet with its myriad of blogs, ‘zines and pseudo news sights, each claiming to have the answer or taunting the other guy for not having it!

God has from the beginning had such issues, for “belief” always seems to come with a price, and belief in God our Creator and subsequently the salvation of His Son, *God incarnate*, will cost. That belief...a *real* belief mind you, will cost you your life as you know it. As I have said before, salvation is free, but discipleship...the belief that makes you move, well that will cost you everything! Hence the world has plenty of reasons to avoid the conversation, to duck the evidence, to evade the issue.

Jesus, with great humility, acquiesces herein and begins to lay out the evidence. He does so with apparent gentleness, no doubt because He “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” (1Tim 2:4). He begins like an attorney for the defense in a court of law...sighting the testimony of an eyewitness and a credible character reference in the person of John the Baptist who was widely regarded as a prophet, despite his eclectic lifestyle and appearance. Make no mistake, Jesus didn’t hold His position because of His popularity or because of public opinion! He said that He “*knew what was in mankind,*” (John 2:24) and thus He “*did not entrust Himself or His credibility to men.*”

We are told that John “bore witness” to the truth. The original language speaks of a witness that is permanent and continual...not merely a one shot thing...say, a picture of John on the witness stand in court. No, this was both a verbal and a life manifest thing that endures now even long after John was martyred. It’s one thing to *say* a thing, it is quite another to live that thing out for one’s whole life, and die for it in the end. Take for instance the statement that we love someone. It has been said that it takes three seconds to say I love you, three hours to explain it, and a lifetime to prove it. *Indeed!*

Mankind is notorious liars...even so much more so today, but one’s long term living is hard to play out as a ruse. Jesus said so Himself, telling us that you will “*know a tree by its fruit,*” and sometimes it takes awhile for fruit to start growing. (Matthew 7:17-20) But Jesus went on in this thinking...telling us that “*...every tree which does not (eventually) bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*”

One can carry on for a time...sometimes even a long time, but eventually a person will always show their colors. We have so witnessed that fact around here many times over the years!

John’s witness was simple, clear, and concise. He stated emphatically and without prejudice “*...Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29) He believed it, He lived it, He manifested the power and the miraculous with it, and He died for it. No more perfect witness could exist! Jesus said that John was a “*burning and shining lamp*” that the people received and enjoyed for a time. They were like the many since then who have at some point participated in the community of a church, only to eventually reject the message and move on after a period of time because the message was no longer palatable. At first it was exciting and beneficial to them because they were receiving something that in their flesh they saw as pleasant and favorable to them and their individual lives. But when God began to ask for something in return...when belonging began to call for sacrifices, they beat a hasty retreat!

Then there was the second evidence: the witness of His works. Works that were kind and other-centered. Works that were supernatural and miraculous, and most of all they were consistently God ordained. Jesus never sought to be ‘the man’ in the limelight or to seek applause. He always credited all to God the Father and sought always to glorify *Him*. He went so far as to even on occasion tell the recipient of a miraculous healing to not tell anyone. But the fact remains that He did some seriously miraculous stuff! This was not denied by those who stood against Him, but rather they attempted to attribute His works to the “other side.” (see Matthew 12:22-29). Thus it was not that they failed to see the evidence that Jesus was the real thing, but their hearts were hardened

and they wanted at all cost to not acknowledge that evidence. For they seem to just know that if they did, the price of that admission would be extreme.

Another issue that rocked the boat was in the fact that Jesus just seemed to be unwilling to follow the rules! It was not just *what* He did in the realm of the miraculous works, but *how He did them!* Once again, just like now, there were so many who wanted His cool blessings but they had so ordered their lives that the facts of Jesus' kingdom paradigm was ultimately rejected and dismissed on the grounds that He was messing with their status quo. After all, they believed that they had their lives... even their religion, in a neat little box all tied up with a ribbon. And then along came Jesus... who blessed the 'wrong' people, and *used* the wrong people, and stepped on the customs and the order of things as they were.

People thought they understood it all and that they had a grasp of God and how it all worked, and then Jesus came a long and messed up everything! Telling people to 'eat His flesh and drink His blood!' I mean, what's that all about? That's just weird! And then He wanted us to love him more than our own families, and serve in some kind of socialist system where we are all equal. Well, as the dawning awareness began to settle, the people then and now have headed on down the road looking for the next deal and the next community, one that is hopefully a little more understanding of what a great guy I am and will not require so much in return.

And then in verse 37, Jesus played the "God card" and stated that even "*the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.*" If you are a student of scripture you know that there are 300 plus prophecies in the Bible that speak of the coming Messiah, all fulfilled by Christ, or expected to be fulfilled in the last days. It's not like Jesus operated in the shadows or ministered in a closet. He was out there for all to see, and for all to judge, and for all to decide based on the evidence.

But such evidence didn't matter to most folks because, as Jesus went on to say, they had "*neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form....and they did not "have His word abiding in them."* So they fell into the category of so many that Jesus spoke of in Mark 4, "*Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand...*" Because if they had, they would have "*turned,*" as in the idea of repentance, and "*their sins would have been forgiven them.*" (Mark 4:12)

The people were indeed "religious." As now, many of them embraced the scriptures, but not as a guide...not as a big sign pointing to the answer, but rather as the 'end all' of their religion. The rules and the regulations...the rituals and the positions that they felt all of it entitled them to. But they never 'got it.' They never grasped the bigger picture in that Jesus was the fulfillment of those scriptures and that it all was culminated in the surrender of one's life to Him and His righteousness in the gospel 'good news' grace of the act of the cross.

All of the miraculous signs, all of the testimony, all of the prophetic fulfillment didn't and *doesn't* matter if you are "*not willing to come to (Him) that you may have life.*" (vs 40) Because ultimately, the greatest evidence...the greatest proof that Jesus was God in flesh...the 'Messiah', the answer and completion of every man, is *you*. In Isaiah 43:12 God speaks saying "*I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and 'you are my witnesses' declares the Lord, "and I am God."*

While we understand that in truth God found *us* far more than in truth that we found God, the fact remains that "you must come to *Him*." For Jesus came what is essentially a million miles...came further than we can humanly grasp, to save us from sin and to save us from ourselves. He came that "(we) *might have life, and that (we) might have it more abundantly.*" He came so very very far for us, but that last step is ours. We have to be willing to reach out to Him for that last few inches and take ownership of our decision. It is in this small act that

the proof of Jesus is made manifest. It is in this act, that we acknowledge His truth and commit to His truth. For it was always the intention of Christ that we would inexplicably be His “proof.”

Yet so many of us continue today to debate with the masses and even debate in our own hearts. We go to church and even read the scriptures. We put fish symbols on our cars and struggle with the issue of holy living. And through it all, many of us just never get there. We ultimately surrender to the fight or limp across the finish line having never truthfully known the “love of God in us” as He says in verse 43. All because we have never really come to Him and surrendered. Never experiencing “His word abiding in you.” We just ‘did church’ and “lived religion” because it behooved us in the flesh to play ball. We looked to Him to *have* the answers, but never reached out to Him *as* the answer!

As He says in verse 38, many of us have never really *believed in Him*. We often wanted to, but never really got there. We kept asking throughout our lives for Jesus to “prove it.” **Prove** you love me by...**prove** you are powerful in all things by...**prove** you are intimately with me by... And the days turned into weeks which turned into months, and now years have went by and you still are waiting for that “life abundantly.” All because you are unwilling to go to Him that last foot and take a hold of Him inside of you and live out that life that HE IS.

Thus we are basked today in the incredible irony that our hearts and lives are still asking Jesus to ‘prove it’ when no one has ever proven such love and commitment to us in our lifetimes or for that matter in the history of humanity. For “*God so loved the world, that He gave His only son*” to die for a debt that was not just inherited by us but for sure *earned* by every one of us, and that “*every one of us that believes in Him*” will “*not perish but rather have life now and life forever.*”

So close, and yet we might as well have missed it by miles. Because we have yet to actually come that final distance to Him. He has done so much to get you there, and yet still we hold back. Never taking that final step...failing to grasp Matthew 16:25 “*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*” We just don’t believe that, so we hold on to this tattered remnant of breath fearing that surrender will be our end instead of our beginning. Thus we remain even today in quiet desperation...still asking Jesus to ‘prove it.’

What more could He have done? He has come so far and today stands so close to you. Isaiah 30:21 *Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it..."*