

The Witness of Christ's Death: A Call to Faith

Understanding the Truth of the Cross for Salvation

I want you to turn in your Bible, if you would please, to John chapter 19. Well, we had quite an interesting weekend. It was a blessing. We had, of course, our men's advance, which I think is the absolute crucial event for men in our church every year. I think it is the single most important thing that a guy can be a part of or avoid. Thursday night, Friday, and Saturday with Brother Joe Doyle, I learned some things about husbanding that was astonishing and beneficial, and very, very timely. And then, of course, Brother Joe preached a very good message Sunday morning, and he and I afterwards, he wasn't feeling good enough to go out to lunch, but we stood out in front of the auditorium and said, you know, this is probably the last time we'll see each other this side of eternity. It will almost certainly be the last time he preaches at our church, and so there are some opportunities that, once missed, can never be recovered. And so we appreciate the opportunity to have him here. We've got Vacation Bible School coming up, that's, of course, of critical importance, very crucial, so please be in prayer. We've got the sign out. I took pictures today, but I got distracted. You know how it is when you're old and you start losing traction and your clutch starts slipping. I still have to put those up on my Facebook page so that all of the haters of the San Gabriel Valley who follow me while hating me, so they'll... Oh, well.

Here we are in John chapter 19. We're looking at that portion of the Gospel according to John that deals with events that follow the Lord Jesus Christ yielding up his spirit and voluntarily dying on the cross at Calvary. And these are things that only John's gospel records, and so we are this evening looking at verse 35, and it reads, "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." Four phrases. This is the first, by the way, of three verses, 35, 36, and 37 of John chapter 19, that attest to the truthfulness of verses 30 through 34. Look up to verse 30, and let's read those five verses together, you reading silently while I read aloud. John 19:30, when Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Nobody killed him. He didn't die, he gave up the ghost. That's a profoundly significant reality, okay? Verse 31, and the Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, preparation for their high holy day Sabbath, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, for that Sabbath day was a high day, besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. Remember, he was crucified between two thieves. And that second execution squad that was dispatched by Pilate came to either

this one and then skipped over the Lord to this one, or came to this one and skipped over the Lord to this one, very unusual. That's just not the way guys typically do stuff. When a guy does stuff, he usually does D or D. He doesn't go this, and then this, and then back, unless he's one of these guys that walks down the sidewalk and doesn't want to step on any cracks. You ever seen anybody like that? They're kind of, you know. Anyway, verse 32, then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they saw that. Well, who are they? They were the most lethal killing machines in the entire world in the first century. There simply did not exist anywhere men who were more familiar with killing and death than they were, more so than almost any doctor alive today, because these guys killed people for a living, and they hung people up on the cross for a living, and they would only take them down after they were dead, and they did that for a living. And so, these guys, if there is a definition of expert in the first century to ascertain whether somebody is alive or dead, that would be these guys, okay? And saw that he was dead already, brake not his legs. There's no need to. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

Now, there's a number of observations to make, the first of which has to do with the pronouns. Look at verse 35 again. Take note of the pronouns, look up please. Pronouns are important. You need to pay attention to pronouns. If you're reading your Bible, and you're not being careful about pronouns, you're not reading it properly, okay? Pronouns are commonly used in place of what? A pronoun replaces a what? A mousetrap? No, a noun. And what is a noun? It's a person, or a place, or a thing, right? And pronouns take the place of proper names, and place names, and concept names, and things like that. So, pronouns are important, but it is the Bible reader's responsibility to conscientiously discern what the pronouns replace. So, we know a pronoun replaces a noun, so we got to figure out what the noun would have been had the pronoun not been used to replace it. You say, "Well, that's not my job." Yes, it is. If you're a reader of the Bible, that is your job. Who or what the nouns are that are represented by the pronouns is your job to find out. You cannot possibly read the Bible well unless you decide, I got to figure out who these pronouns represent, or what these pronouns represent. Now, let's ignore the italicized word in verse 35. Why would we do that? Why would we ignore the italicized word in verse 35? Yeah, yeah, it's an opinion, and there's no counterpart to that word in the original language. So, this word, it, there's no it in this verse in the Greek New Testament, and the translators put it in, and they italicized it because they're honest, letting everybody know, this is our opinion, we think this will help you understand. And sometimes it does help us, and sometimes it's not so helpful. So, ignoring the italicized word in verse 35, we have five pronouns used in this verse. In order, from the beginning of the verse to the end of the verse, those pronouns are he, his, he, he, he, and ye, right? So, let's label them, right? Let me label them. He, number one, his, there's only one of them, so we don't need to label it, then there's he, number two, then there's he, number three, and then there's ye. We don't need to label ye because there's only one of those, but there are three he's: he one, he two, he three. All right. So, who or what do those five pronouns represent? It is an important matter to settle, as you will see as we proceed.

I, personally, am persuaded, and you can verify if you want, or disagree if you want, everybody has the right to be wrong, but this is my opinion. I am persuaded he number one is the author of this gospel, and that would be the Apostle John. And the way you tell is because of his characteristic style of writing. He refers to himself as the apostle Jesus loved, instead of saying me, he will say the apostle that Jesus loved, he, and he likes to be kind of circumspect that way, right? He's a little uncomfortable at pointing the finger at himself, even though, by inspiration, he needs to point out that it's him, but he does so in a somewhat less than obnoxious way, okay? So, I'm also persuaded, his, as well, refers to John. So, he number one and his both refer to John, okay, in my opinion. He number two, in my opinion, refers to God, as the all-knowing witness to the events that John recorded. God sees all, God knows all, okay? And then, there is he number three, which I believe, again, refers to John, as the credible witness of fact, who says what is true. And, finally, ye refers to you and me. It refers to the target audience of this gospel account. It refers to who John's record of events is written for. It's referring to the readers, that would be you, and that would be me.

And this leaves me with the following paraphrase, you could call this the Walrip paraphrase of verse 35. So, let me read to you my paraphrase, okay? Not intended to replace the word of God, but just to give you a little bit better comfort level. And I, John, that saw, bear record, and my, that is, John's, record is true. And God knoweth that I, John, saith true, that you, who read this account, might believe. That you, who read this account, might believe. Now, I've mentioned on many occasions that there are about 30 passages in God's word that deal with the principle of two or three witnesses as necessary in God's dealings with humanity, and our desired, reasonable dealings with each other, to establish something as fact, so that we're not living according to rumor and gossip and innuendo, right? And hearsay, right? So, in this verse, John points out that he is a witness to the events that he recorded in the preceding verses, and he insists that he is a credible witness. He's insisting, I am a credible witness. The details of his record are important to him, but he goes beyond carefully recording the details to point out that his corroboration of the facts that he reported comes from God, who's the second witness to what he is saying as true. He is the first witness, the second witness, according to this verse, is God. That's significant.

So, John scrupulously applies the principle of two or three witnesses to the voluntary death of Christ, that the legs of his dead body were not broken, in fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy, and that a member of the Roman execution squad was careful to verify that he was dead. How did the Roman soldier verify that he was dead? He put that sword, that spear point, underneath, I think, underneath his bottom rib, and he lifted it up, and he pulled it back out, and out came blood and water. But I think it was on this side, blood and water came out. So, that was additional verification that what they thought moments before, ah, that we don't need to break this guy's legs, he's already dead. And one guy said, "Well, let's, let's, let's prove it beyond any shadow of doubt." Okay.

Now, let's take a step back. Let's say you come to the Gospel according to John, and you have virtually no knowledge of the Bible. You don't, you don't know the Bible very

much, because you don't read the Bible very much. The closer you get to dying and going to hell doesn't seem to bother you. You have no interest in spending all eternity dancing on, like, spit on a hot griddle. Now, you are, you're very careful not to hold your hand over an open flame in your kitchen. Oh, you don't want, you don't want that to happen. You say, "Why not?" Well, because that's very unpleasant. But you give no thought whatsoever to being in the lake of fire forever, okay? So, try this out for five minutes, and see whether or not you want to go to hell. Nobody seems to be willing to do that. The only person in my lifetime that was ever willing to do that was a guy named Gordon Litty. Anybody here ever heard of him? Gordon Litty was a guy that was connected with Watergate, and this is how bad this guy was. He was at a restaurant with somebody, being interviewed, and the guy doubted his credibility and his veracity, and he looked at the guy, and he says, "Let me show you how reliable my word is." And he held his hand out over a candle, and he kept it there, he didn't move it, until it started cooking his flesh. Third-degree burns, third-degree burns, he was barbecuing himself at a restaurant over a candle. That's the only guy that I know of who ever did that voluntarily, okay.

So, let's assume that there's a person that doesn't know hardly anything about the Bible, but the person is a good reader, maybe went to school back in the day when they taught phonics, maybe went to school back in the day when they taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, instead of politics and grievance. And so, if you know nothing of the Bible, but you are an accomplished reader, and you're a person who pays attention to grammar, and you pay attention to the style of the writing, and you came to this, you would immediately discern that the author is writing about a matter that is of great importance to him, okay? Let's say you've read 19 and a half chapters of the Gospel according to John, and all of a sudden, this jumps off the page at you. Wow, this guy is really serious now. He's really serious now. I mean, he's always been serious, he always meant what he said, and said what he meant, but here, wow. And you could, you could, you can discern this, even if you have no knowledge of the Bible, just by the style of the writing. This is of great importance to whoever wrote this, okay? And this is because it was John's intent that we take what he has written very, very seriously.

And the question, of course, is to what end? Why should we take what he has just written very, very, very seriously? The guy that saw those things, who was witness to what the Savior experienced, bore record of what he saw, and he used the Greek word for martyr. He is a self-described, the word martyr means witness. You don't always have to die to be a good witness, okay? But if you're a good witness, you're willing to die. And that guy's record of what he saw was true. Additionally, third phrase of the verse, God knows that what the guy said is true. But to what end? Why? Look at the last phrase, that you might believe. That you might believe. Phrase one, phrase two, phrase three, so that phrase four, that you might believe. There are three Greek words translated into this English phrase, that you might believe. We have four words in English, but there's only three words in Greek. The first Greek word is a very tiny little word, it only has three letters, and it's pronounced henna. Henna. And that is a marker word in the Greek language, a marker the Greeks used to denote purpose, used to denote the aim, or used to denote the goal of something, to answer the question, why?

All right. And I point this out to show you that this little word removes any doubt about what John's intention was. There is no question among anybody who reads this. Nobody wonders what he's getting at. He flat out tells his readers what he wanted to happen as a result of how he wrote this verse, and the verses leading up to it. This is what he wants to happen, right, right, right, right, right, right, right, so that you will believe, so that you will believe.

Next comes the second Greek word, humace, translated as the word ye, or the plural you all, in some parts of the country that are better at English than Yankees. This is the subject of the verb in this sentence, and it refers to those of us who are reading John's vitally important account following our Lord's death on the cross. The last word in the sentence, and the incredibly important verb, action word, that John used, is derived from the Greek word for faith. The Greek word for faith is pistis. Just think of a pistol, only instead of an L, you got an S, pistis. When you take the concept of faith and you make it an action, the word changes from pistis, pistis is the concept of faith, pistis is the action of faith, believing. It's easier to see in Greek than in English, because faith and believe are two completely different words, they don't look anything alike in English, but in Greek, the noun and the verb look very much alike, and are spelled almost identically, except for the last couple of letters in each word, with faith referring to the concept, and believe referring to the action, okay?

Now, all of this is good stuff, but there's something even more intriguing about the word translated as might believe. Notice, in our Bible, it's might believe. The mood of the Greek verb is what is called subjunctive, okay? That means John is expressing the desirable, but by no means guaranteed, result. It's almost like he's saying, I hope this will happen. It's not a future verb, this will happen, because he doesn't know that. He hopes this will happen, and that's what subjunctives are used for, to express what you think might happen, what you hope will happen, what you wish will happen. So, John here is expressing what he wanted, but he left open what you will actually do. Interesting, huh? He lets us know what he wants, but he doesn't tell us what you are going to do about it. We know what he wants you to do about it, but we don't know what you are going to do about it. What will you do? What will you do with the verified facts about the death of Jesus Christ on the cross? What are you going to do with that? You just going to leave it there? How, how will you react to the eternal Son of the living God, the sinless Savior of sinful men's souls, the Lamb of God? How will you react? What are you going to do with the fact that he was unjustly, illegally, and brutally crucified, before he voluntarily gave up the ghost, but after saving one of the two thieves, and after saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? They just don't really understand what they're doing. They just don't get it. Lost people just don't get it. I remember being a lost guy. I just flat didn't get it. I remember when I was in Vacation Bible School, and Miss Peabody and Miss Rup were teaching the gospel. I remember when my granny sat me down and took me through Romans and tried to witness to me. I remember when my uncle, who had been a Japanese prisoner of war, came to Christ, came up to visit us, he sat down and witnessed to me for a couple of hours. I loved the guy, I liked the guy, I admired the guy, I wanted to please him, I had no idea what he was talking about. Right over my head. I just, I just didn't get it. I just didn't get it. So,

that doesn't mean I wasn't responsible, but it did mean that I had no understanding, which is the situation with unsaved people. Mark it down, if you're lost, you have no understanding, okay?

So, let me conclude with some comments about faith, because the point of this is that you might believe, so it has to do with faith, right? The whole point of what he has written is so that you will exercise faith, so that you will trust, so that you will believe in Jesus Christ. So, the issue here is faith. So, let me mention some things about faith that he doesn't talk about, but I have talked about, and we'll mention in passing, very quickly. Nowhere in the Bible is faith actually defined. Did you know that? Nowhere in the Bible is faith actually defined. I define faith as the right conclusion of circumstantial evidence. That's what I think faith is, but it's nowhere defined in the Bible, okay? Faith's components are listed in Hebrews 11:1, but that verse is not a definition, and people who say that are mistaken about what definitions are. Hebrews 11:1 reads, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." So, that lets us know what some of the components of faith are. Faith's importance is declared in Hebrews 11:6, but without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Faith's source is found in 2 Corinthians 4:13, we having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken, we also believe, and therefore speak. It's the spirit of faith, means faith comes from the Spirit. Faith's means of acquisition is shown in Romans 10:17, so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Finally, faith's arrival in a sinner's life is explained. Paul told the Thessalonians, "Not all men have faith." Well, of those that do have faith, how do they get it? Ephesians chapter 2:8, "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it," which is faith here, "is the gift of God." So, God gives you the gift of faith, so that he might give you the gift of eternal life. He gives you the gift, and then uses that gift to give you the gift of eternal life.

So, what does this mean to you? It means that when John uses this form of the word believe, at the end of this factual presentation of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, with exquisite detail, you are now responsible, and you are responsible to, and justified in, trusting Jesus Christ for his salvation from your sins. It's now on you. It's on you. Let's pray. Thank you, Father, for your goodness. Give us wisdom, please work in people's lives, help us to better understand faith as believers, and use this to draw the lost to Christ, we ask in Jesus' name, amen.