

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Witness of the Body

Scripture: John 15:26-27

Code: 1310

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Our Father, as we approach your word tonight, we would pray that our hearts would be open, and that the Spirit of God might pour truth in that we need to understand. Help us, Father, to be able to put in perspective all these truths, to relate them to our lives, that we might understand our relation to you and to each other and to a lost world. We give you the praise in Christ's name, amen.

Tonight we are going to do what is definitely a Bible study. We're going to be moving through the text rather rapidly, so get your Bible and your notebook ready, and to begin with, open your Bible to the 15th chapter of John. And just leave it there open for a moment. I wanna make some introductory remarks, and then we'll look at this particular passage and the text that we wanna discuss tonight.

As you know, this is the beginning of our missionary conference. This is also the second in a series on the concept of the Body of Christ. And in order to dove tail these two particular themes; both the Body of Christ and missions, we are speaking tonight on the subject of the witness of the body. And by body, I'm not talking about the physical body, although it is also very true that your physical body sends off certain communication by the way you act and the things you do with your body. I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about the Body of Christ and the witness of the Body of Christ.

Now we showed you last week that the church is presented in the New Testament as an organism. And that organism is called the Body of Christ. Christ is the head, we are the members of his body. He disseminates his thoughts, his impulses, his direction and his power and his life through us, and we operate. We are one body with Christ as the head. And we talked about what that meant last time. As I said this morning, if you didn't get that message, you weren't here, be sure you have opportunity to listen to the tape so you understand this most important New Testament concept.

We said then that Christ is the head, the Holy Spirit is the power of the body, and redeemed people make up the members of the body. Now we also showed you from First Corinthians 12 last week, which was our text, that the body has three key features: unity, diversity and mutuality or harmony. The body is one, yet within the Body of Christ there are many, many gifts all ministering to each other, bringing about even a greater oneness, and that there is not only this unity and this diversity, but there's a mutuality. There must be a harmonizing of all these ministries.

The principle on which the body is to operate, we showed you, is humility. The body functions on humility. The body functions on each one thinking of others rather than himself. The body functions on no man thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. The body functions on like-mindedness, having the mind of Christ which is the mind of humility each esteeming others better than himself.

So the principle on which the body operates is humility. The mark by which the body is distinguished is love. Love is the over ruling characteristic of the body. The service of the body is to minister spiritual gifts. So the principle of the body is humility, the mark of the body is love, the service of the body is to minister spiritual gifts to one another. And by spiritual gifts we mean those listed in First Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians Chapter 4.

Then the purpose for which God brought the body into existence is that it might be a channel through which he can accomplish his will. The purpose of the body is ultimately to be edified that it might witness to the world. And so we see the principle humility, the mark love, the service minister spiritual gifts, the purpose that we might be edified to witness; that we might be strong as one communicating Christ.

Now from the beginning of God's communication to man, he has endeavored to manifest his image in man. When he sent Jesus Christ into the world, he planted his own person in a body, didn't he. And the image of God was in Jesus Christ, he was the image of God, Hebrews 1 said.

So in a human body, God manifested himself. But that body arose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and that body is now no longer visible on earth. We cannot any longer see the body which manifests God. Now mark this - Christ sent his Holy Spirit to bring about another body; to bring into existence a new body. The body of Christ, this time not his physical body, but this time, many physical bodies making up his one body, the church. And in the church, Christ continues to dwell through the indwelling spirit. So that Christ is in the body the church, manifesting his glory and all his attributes, just as he did in his human body when he was here for 33 years.

When Christ's literal body was here, he manifested love, holiness, wisdom, power, and the glory of God. In this new body the church, and through this new body, he wants to manifest the very same identical things; love, holiness, wisdom, power, and the glory of God. We are the Body of Christ. We are as one to manifest Christ.

Now, God's will then for this earthly body called the church is as Paul says in Ephesians 4, that all of the members of the body, you and I who know Christ - all of us are parts of the body - that all of us should come to the unity of the faith of the knowledge of the son of God under the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. We are actually - now mark it there - to become one body like Christ. We are the new manifestation of Jesus Christ as he indwells us by his spirit.

He has thus designed to manifest through this body the church, his manifold wisdom and glory. And you see, that is why Romans 8 tells us in verse 28 and 29 that he has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his son. And this is a miracle. Imagine the miraculous nature of such a thing. That Christ can take these human bodies, subject to sin and death; these frail, physical bodies, and make them into his temple - literally dwelling in them, planting in them his glory - that they might manifest him to the world. What a tremendous miracle.

That I as an individual can manifest Jesus Christ to this world, and that you and I together as a body, the Body of Christ, also are called to manifest Christ. What a demonstration of God's power and love.

Now, here's the key. Understand this: it is through this body the church, this collective unity of all belief - it is through this body that Christ wants to manifest the mighty, victorious power of his person. Do you see it? We are to manifest as a body Christ to the world. That's the point of our existence as a body.

This, then - mark it - is a body for witness. We are called together to be mature and edified, that is taught and build up, that we might witness to the world. The reason for our unity is that the world might believe that Jesus came from God. The reason for our unity is witness. We are a body for witness. And so when we talk about the witness of the body, we're hitting it dead center.

Now within the body we saw that there are diverse gifts for the edifying of the body, and for its maturity. But while there is diversity in the body, as it ministers to itself, with all these gifts, while there's diversity in the body and ministering, the more diversity and the more operative diverse gifts, the more obvious unity will become to the world. The more we minister to each other with our diverse gifts, the more we become one and the more the world can see our oneness. And when the world sees our oneness, they'll know that Christ came from God. That's what Jesus said. We are a body for witness.

Now mark two things, and these are the two things we're gonna keep banging away at tonight. Number one, we witness as individual members of the body, number two we are to witness as a total body.

No individual member is excused from being a witness, did you know that? I had people say, "Well I don't think the Lord has called me to be a witness." No, that isn't so. Every one of us is a witness. Every individual member of the body is a member for witness. Acts 1:8: "You shall receive power", said Jesus, "after the holy power has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses." There's no option there, none at all. The Apostle Paul so carefully points this out in Second Corinthians 5:17, just listen. "Therefore if any man be in Christ he's a new creation. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation". There's nobody excused from that - anybody whose been reconciled

has the ministry of communicating reconciliation to others. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Verse 20: "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled of God". Every believer whose been born again, everyone whose been reconciled has been given the ministry of reconciliation. No believer is excused from being a witness. Every Christian is a witness of Christ, to bring others to Christ. Nobody is off the hook on that. We are a body for edifying that we might be a body for witness. We are individual members to be edified that we might be individual members for effective witness. See, the ultimate goal of the body folks is witness. Witness. Witness. Why do we wanna be one? That the world might know that God sent Christ, that's why, not so that we can say "we're one, we're one". Not at all.

This is our mission. Whether its' here or in Africa, whether its' in the mission field or whether it's right here in Southern California; we are individual members for witness, and we are a body for witness.

Now tonight we wanna see what the New Testament teaches about the nature of our witness, as members and as a total body. And the text is John 15:26. Now I want you to look at it. John 15:26 and 27. Beginning in verse 26: "But when the comforter has come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me and ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with from the beginning.

Now in those two verses as we break those up, we're going to discover a whole concept of witness. The whole scheme of witness all the way from God to you and every step in between is covered in those two verses; profound verses.

Now the word witness is a very interesting word. It's used there in verse 27. Witness is a legal term. It takes us into a law court. We see a judge on the bench, and we see a prisoner on trial. We hear the case argued by lawyers, first the prosecution and then the defense, and both of them call witnesses to substantiate their case. And we as individual members of the body are individual witnesses in a trial. You say who's on trial? Jesus Christ is on trial. Who's the judge? The world is the judge. Who's the defense attorney? The Holy Spirit. Who's the prosecution? Satan with his lies and accusations. Now we'll see all this in a moment.

Now we said we have two ways to witness as individual members and as a total body. First let's consider our witness as individual members. We are individual, separate witnesses in a situation where Jesus Christ; is on trial. Jesus Christ; is on trial before the world today, not the Sanhedrin, not Pilot, not Herod Antipas, but the world. He's on trial at the bar of world opinion. And the godless world is the judge. And the world is constantly judging Christ on the basis of the witnesses. They judge him to be a fake, some judge him to be a good man, others judge him to be a teacher, others judge him to be a liar, etc. But the world is judging Jesus Christ on the basis of the effect of the witnesses do

you see from that how absolutely strategic your witness becomes? For if your witness tears down the claims of Jesus Christ by the kind of life you live, you're better off out of the court altogether; you only confuse the issue. The devil is the prosecutor who accuses Christ and the witnesses with lies and false accusations.

Notice it says in verse 26 when the comforter is come; the word comforter is _____. It came to mean "the counsel for the defense". It's one called alongside to help. It refers to the Holy Spirit who is the counsel for defense - he is defending Christ and calling you and I as individual members of the body to witness and confirm the testimony of Christ. Sad to say, much of our witnessing does not confirm the testimony of Christ. Some Christian witnesses do greater harm than if they weren't Christians, you know that. Others have effective witness all over the world defending him and commending Christ, and substantiating his claims by their lies.

And so we witness as individual members. We don't choose to witness, we only choose whether we're gonna help Christ or harm his cause, that's all. You are a witness. Mark it - you are a witness. The only question is whether you're a good one or a bad one.

Then the second way we can witness is as a body. We could witness to this world if we were one, couldn't we. Could you imagine the devastating impact that a united church would have on this world? And I don't mean an ecumenical church where everybody kisses doctrine goodbye and throws their arms around each other and marches down to help the poor. Now, I believe in helping the poor. Jesus said if you see somebody have need and you don't help him, that's sin. We wanna help the poor. But we do not unite in a struggle for social rights. But the body of Christ needs to be one, and we're not.

Today, the testimony of the body as one is pathetic. We are a Corinthian testimony, did you know that? Our testimony is strife, division, carnality and confusion, just like the Corinthians. And the world is rendering its verdict on the strength of these two witnesses; you and I as individual members of the body, and the body as a whole.

Now I wanna expand those two things tonight. And you'll see them expand as you look at verses 26 and 27. And in these verses I want you to see the nature of effective witness. The nature of effective witness- that's the proposition - the nature of effective witness, and then I wanna give you six points, and I want you to get them. The nature of effective witness. Here it comes. Don't write them all down now, we'll go one at a time, but just listen.

Effective witness has certain characteristics, and they're all given in these two verses, here they come. Christian witness is to the world, Christian witness is of the son. Christian witness is by the Father, Christian witness is through the Holy Spirit, and Christian is in the member individually and Christian witness is in the body in total. Now we'll divide all those up.

The first feature of true, powerful, potent Christian witness is this: Christian witness is to the world. Did you get that? The world is the objective of our witness. Verse 26 - "But when the comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me and ye also shall bear witness." Now you know this _____ gives no object. It doesn't say to whom, either the Spirit or these particular disciples or believers shall communicate with; does not give any object. But it is obvious that the reference is to the world. It is obvious because that's what he's been talking about since verse 18 of this chapter. He has been talking about the antagonistic, hateful, Christ-despising world. They are the object of our witness. And we will never really understand - now mark this - we will never really understand the nature of our witness as a body or as individual members until we understand what the world is. Because the world is our target. You see, it's before the world that Jesus is on trial.

Now John's writings spell out clearly what the world is. The prince and ruler of this world is the Devil; John 12. The whole world is in his power, First John 2:17. The world is in the process of - now first John 2:17 is the idea that the world is passing away. So the world is in the power of Satan, it's controlled by Satan, it's passing away, but while it lasts, it is the absolute antagonist of the church, it hates the church, and its hatred is deep and bitter. So the words in our text, verse 26 and 27, those two versus. Those versus in our text are embedded - now mark it - are embedded in a context of hostility and the hatred of the world.

To show you this, look at verse 18. "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you". Verse 19: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but because you're not of the world that I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Verse 21: "But all these things will they do unto you for my namesake because they know not him that sent you" - they're gonna harm you. Verse 24: "If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not seen. But now they have both seen and hated both me and my father. Verse 25: "But this cometh to pass that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause." Verse 1 of 16: "These things have I spoken to you that you should not be offended, they shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God's service. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor me."

This whole passage is a text about the hatred of the world. And slapped right in the middle of it is verse 26 and 27, which tells us clearly that our testimony and our witness is to the world. The world hates, the world ostracizes, the world kills; this is the antagonism of the world. But Jesus goes on to show that we must witness to the world. And the key is verse 26 the first word, what is it? But even though the world hates, even though the world ostracizes, even though the world kills, but when the comforter is come, then you will witness to that world. Our witness, friends, is to the world. It is not a witness when you sit around with other believers and talk about Jesus Christ - that's not a witness necessarily. A hostile, devilish Christ-hating world is the object of our witness.

You say, well how is a body member to react when he's faced with the opposition of the world? I mean if they throw you out, if they curse you. What are you supposed to do, retaliate in anger? No. Well are you supposed to lick your wounds and self-pity? No. Supposed to withdraw; go back to a Bible study? Nope. You're bravely to bear witness before the world, no matter what the cost may be. And count it all joy to suffer for Jesus Christ.

Christian witness, friends, is to the world. That's where we are to bear the witness. And if you're not bearing your witness to the world, you've missed the whole point.

Second thing. Christian witness is not only to the world, it is of the Son. Did you get that? Hmm. So good. Verse 26: "When the comforter is come whom in will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me". Verse 27: "And ye shall also bear witness, because you have been with me". Testimony is to the Son. The world's hatred is focused on Jesus Christ. "They hated me without a cause", he says back in verse 25. It is Jesus Christ who is on trial, and our testimony must be of him. You see, throughout the gospel, every time there is preaching, it is always Jesus Christ who is central. John illustrates this about his testimony being of Christ in Revelations. Chapter 1 verse 2, John says: "Who bore witness of the Word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ". John's testimony was Christ. Over in the 12th chapter you read, I think it's the 12th chapter and the 17th verse, he reiterates the same thing. "Yes, and the dragon was angry with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed to keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Any kind of testimony, any kind of witness was always directly associated with Jesus Christ.

In fact, John even says in chapter 19 I think it is verse 10 of Revelation, that even the Old Testament witnessed to Christ for he says, "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." Christ's testimony is even a character in the Old Testament by prophecy. Didn't they prophecy about Christ? All true testimony is about Jesus Christ. The Apostles weren't in any doubt about that. Jesus told them before and after his death and resurrection that they were to testify them and Acts 180 says "you shall be *my* witnesses." Witnesses of me. And they obeyed, and their sermons in the early church were always about Jesus Christ.

You say well we already know that - well there are a lot of people who don't seem to know that. They talk and preach about a lot of things, and then leave out what the whole testimony is about. In Acts 10 - I love this portion. He talks - and this is Peter preaching unto Cornelius: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil for God was with him " - watch this - "and we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the Land of the Jews in Jerusalem whom they slew and hanged on a tree. And God raised up the third day and showed him openly". And he goes on and on - his sermons were always about j, always about Jesus.

Verse 43, listen to what he says: "To him give all the prophets' witness." Do you hear that? All the prophets witness even to Christ. Our witness is to the Son. It's amazing how much so-called witnessing has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. All so much work, even in the missionary work - is talking about religion or talking about the church or vaguely talking about God - we say "Oh, I witnessed to my friend". Well what did you say? Well, I kind of let him know that I go to church,. You didn't witness to your friend, that's not a witness. A witness is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

You know, often our witness is an autobiography. Have you ever analyzed yours? _____ we never get around to Christ, we just give an autobiography. Tell our whole testimony, and they don't know any more about Jesus than when we started except that something happened to us. witnessing is not a discussion of the church, friends. Witnessing is not a discussion about religion, and witnessing is not a discussion just about you. witnessing is a testimony to whom? Jesus Christ. That's witnessing. Don't let your conscience let you get away with anything .less. so witnesses to the world and of the son; always of the son. That's witness.

Third thing. Christian witness is also by the Father. This is beautiful- by the Father. Verse 26: "When the comforter has come whom I will send to you from the father". Oh this is beautiful. Through Jesus Christ sending a spirit, he was really sending God's witness to this world. for the spirit proceeded from the father and bore the father's testimony to the world. let me show you how this works. This is just tremendous.

Do you know who the greatest witness is of Christ? The Father. The father is the chief witness. it was the father's supreme concern to bring honor and glory to the son - that's what he wanted to do. in John particularly chapter 5, but one verse I think of in chapter 8:54: "Jesus answered if I honor myself, my honor is nothing". Listen to this. "It is my father that honoreth me". and back in chapter 5, some tremendous verses, verse 31: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true". Verse 32, "There's another that beareth witness of me and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true". Verse 36: "I have greater witness than that of John, for the works which the father hath given me to finish the same works that I do bear witness of me that the father has sent me". verse 37: "And the father himself who hath sent me hath borne witness of me."

In other words, Jesus says the father is my chief witness. he is the one primarily concerned with communicating who I am. And I am merely sending you the spirit who proceeds from the father to carry the father's witness and plant it within you, see? You say well how did the father bear witness to the son? I mean personally. That's easy. You know how the father bore witness to the son? First place, through the Old Testament. Look at verse 39 of John 5, listen to it: "Search the Scriptures", Jesus says to these Jews, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life" - listen to this - "and they are they which testify of me". my father witnessed to me in the Old Testament; it's all about me. and indeed the Old Testament is all about Jesus Christ.

In Luke, great portion 24:27, Jesus says to the disciples on the road to Emmaus: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. The Old Testament was the father's witness to the son, wasn't it.

The second way in which God witnessed to his son. Second in a beautiful, beautiful way. and that's on John chapter 10, verse 25. "Jesus answered them 'I told you and you believe not. The works that I do in my father's name, they bear witness of me". you know the father also gave witness to the son by enabling the son to do mighty works, did you know that? You know that the works that Jesus did were the father's witness that he was who he claimed to be?

Chapter 14 of John, verse 10: "Believest thou not that I am in the father and the father in me, the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works". Did you know that the very works that Christ did were actually the works of the father attesting to his claim to deity? You say how did the father witness to the son? Number one in the Old Testament, number two in the words and works of Jesus. God enabled him to do those things.

There's a third way the father witnessed to the son and that was by direct verbal witness. at the baptism he said thou art my beloved son. So the father witnessed to the son. All true Christian witness is to the world, of the son, originating by the father.

So the mighty works of Jesus Christ signs through which he manifested his glory were really the works of the father operating within the son. And so the father is the source of all witness about Christ. And isn't it tremendous that the witness is recorded for us in Scripture? The Old Testament is here, isn't it. all the works that Jesus did is here, the words that he spoke are here, the statement of the father at his baptism is here; all of the father's witness is right here, isn't it. you know something? Your witness and my witness should be nothing, and could be nothing greater than an echo of the father's witness. you say how do you know what his witness was? You study it right here. And then you echo it. that's why we're spending so much time in the gospel of John, in order that you might know the father's witness and echo it to the world.

So we as members and as a body wanna support the father's testimony, don't we. Christian witness then is to the world, of the son, by the father.

Fourthly, and we're moving rapidly. Christian witness is through the spirit. Verse 26 of John 15: "when the comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the father, even the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the father- you see, the spirit only bears the father's testimony - he shall testify of me. so actually, it's the father's witness that comes through the spirit, you see? In other words, the spirit actually operated in Christ to testify. That's why when they condemned Christ and said he did what he did by the power of Satan, he said you blaspheme whom? The Holy Spirit. Because it is he that's

working through me.

And so a Christian witness then is to the world, of the son, by the father, coming through the Holy Spirit; who empowered Christ and whom my friend indwells and empowers our witness doesn't it. is the witness for Christ apart from the Holy Spirit? Can't. all true witness is through the spirit.

Now we're coming close to the practical key that's gonna unlock the door and turn us loose to effective witness, so hang on to your hat. Jesus plainly declares that the father's testimony of Jesus comes through the Holy Spirit. Whatever witness God has in the world, friends, he has through the Holy Spirit. Did you get that? Notice the Holy Spirit has two names: comforter, verse 26, _____, it literally means one call alongside to help or comfort or give advice, it came to mean a lawyer or an advocate. It's translated advocate in reference to Jesus Christ who's our advocate; same word. Counsel for the defense. The Holy Spirit is Christ's defense lawyer. The world is judging him, the Holy Spirit is defending him. And the Holy Spirit calls you and I into the court to testify.

He's also called - notice it in the middle of verse 26 - the spirit of truth. That tells us what kind of testimony he gives- he always tells the truth, he can't lie. He cannot be a false witness, he's always true.

So the spirit, then is the witness. He's the witness today, in us, glorifying Christ through us. now there we see the basis of witness. It is to the world, of the body, by the father, through the spirit. You can't witness apart from the spirit. Christ couldn't operate apart from the spirit, could he. Spirit operated through him. that's the way he said it, and that's the way the father designed it.

And he said, well where do we come in? I mean, all this witnessing is going on, and we're not even around. To the world of the son by the father through the spirit, where are we? Here we go. Are you ready?

Us. Christian witness is in the members. 5.5, in the members. Individually. Verse 27: "And he also shall bear witness" and special reference to the disciples who had been around, but also including us. "You also shall bear witness" - individual members. So how does this work? Listen. Where does the spirit dwell today? Where does he dwell? In us. we are the vehicle carrying the witness that proceeds from the father, by the spirit, and out from us. Did you know the Holy Spirit has no physical voice? Sure you knew that. The Holy Spirit has no platform to do his witnessing unless it's through us. in the individual members of the body whom he indwells, the witness is resident. John 14:17 Jesus says I'm gonna send the Holy Spirit, and listen to this - he says "he is with you and shall be in you", First Corinthians 6:19 and 20 Paul says what? "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" he lives within you, that's where the witness is - right in your body. As individual members. Every believer possesses the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:9: "Any man hath not the spirit of Christ he is not of his". Every believer has the Holy Spirit, the resident witness.

And I'll tell you something - if the Holy Spirit is going to speak, listen, it'll be through you and it'll be through me, because that's where he dwells. I love it in Acts 4:31: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spake the word with boldness". See? The spirit of God indwelling us, Acts 4:31, power to witness. so we as members of the body are individual witnesses, empowered individually by an individually resident Holy Spirit. That's what missions is, friends. That's what missions is all about.- it's us carrying the testimony of the father, brought to us through the spirit, and communicating it to the world. that's what missions is.

And there's another good qualification that we have, we are not only qualified to be witnesses because of the resident Holy Spirit, but we're qualified because we've experienced Jesus Christ; firsthand, haven't we. You can't be a witness if you haven't experienced it. in order to be a witness in a court case, you have to be there.

Now I can only think of one time in my life when I was a witness in a court case, and I will never forget how it happened. I was in my office, the church where my dad was formerly pastor, and secretary ran in and said there's a fight going on in the parking lot. And she said, "Would you like to see it?" so I ran out the door, and boy I mean it was a fight. One guy was lying on the ground and two very large type persons were furiously kicking him.

Well there was about 15 or 17 people, a group of them, standing around on the sidewalk just gasping - doing nothing, but looking. And I was there as all my ministerial pomp, and I realized that having come out of the door, I had to do something. I couldn't just stand there. So I decided I'd take this thing into my own hands. So I pulled my chest up to where it used to be, and - well you know how it is -and I yelled across the parking lot, "Break it up". And they didn't, so I thought well, probably a cross wind, they didn't hear me. or else they didn't seem or something.

Anyway, so I proceeded to go across the parking lot. So I went across there, I kept saying "Break it up, leave that guy alone". and I got over there, and I heard something. And I heard this one guy say, "Kill him, kill him, kill him". And I looked down, I couldn't recognize his face in a mass of blood and pulp - they had kicked his face clear, they had crushed all of his ribs, and they had never seen him in their life. Walking down the street drinking an Orange Julius from the Orange Julius stand, and they just thought they wanted to beat up somebody. Jumped out of the car, attacked him and he hit back, and now they had become so insensitive, they were high, and somebody tried to kill him.

So I walked out there and I thought to myself, oh, this is not a fight, it's a murder. Here I am saying break it up. and you really don't know what to do in a situation like that, and your mind is all bogged so I just stood there and they were really big, and the closer I got the bigger they got. Turned out one of them was about 6'5, 250, the other was about 6'3, 245, professional _____, and just gigantic guys who also played professional rugby, and they were nasty people. just really nasty.

So anyway I was standing up, I didn't really know how to handle the situation, so I said break it up and they didn't. finally I just yelled at this one guy, and I didn't know what else to do, it was a third guy in the getaway car, and this biggest guy turned after me and he came toward me. and I immediately stepped backwards. I mean I've always said I'll fight anybody smaller than me that's had a recent illness, but so he started after me, I really didn't know what to do, I didn't know if he had a knife or a gun or what, and so I just started reflex backing up. and I backed right back to the church door, and the other guy was just standing there over the body. And at that point, my father came out, very dignified, and I don't know what got into him but he said, and I'll never forget it, he looked at this one guy and he said, "What's going on here? I'll have you know, I'm the minister".

I really don't know what kind of a reaction he expected, but I know the kind of reaction he got - the fellow hit him. in the meantime, I had turned and called the secretary to call the police, and she was running and dialing the police. And he just really hauled off and hit my dad with a perfect shot - hit him across the room, and then turned to the left and got me, and I kind of rode it out, saw it coming. You know you can take a lot but then when somebody hits your father, that just gets to you. so when he hit my father, I said, "Now you've had it". the police are coming.

Well, after a long period of time this guy just kept threatening me with his fist - I found out he had a police record that was very - in fact now he's dead. He was killed in a barroom brawl not long after he got out of jail after a year for what he did this day. But anyway, finally I got the message through, they had hit the man's head on the wall of the church - we had to repaint it, blood was everywhere - just mangled him. He lived. But I'll never forget, I had to go to court as a witness. and they said do you wanna be a witness? I said sure. They said, well they've threatened the lives of other witnesses, these guys have been in and out of this before, and they do make a profession out of beating up people, and they've threatened other witnesses -and they threatened me, but I - I mean, I'm no hero, obviously, but I felt the security of the Lord in this thing, and I knew I could run faster than either one of them anyway. And so I said I'll go and I'll be a witness.

And I went to court, and I was asked three things - what did you see, what did you hear and what did you feel. That was basically what a witness was. A witness is somebody who experienced it. I heard it, I saw it, I felt it. I was there. That's what a witness is. In First John 1:1 you know what John says? " That which we have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears and our hands have handled concerning the word of life, that we declare unto you." that's what a witness is.

So being a witness, you don't have to go out and say, "Well I can't be a witness because I can't give a great dissertation on the doctrine of the immuzio, and I don't know how to explain _____" you don't need to worry about that. All you need to do is say I have met Jesus Christ, and you're a witness. you have the qualifications.

That's a long way of saying that a witness not only is indwelled by the Holy Spirit, but has firsthand experience. In fact, it is his firsthand experience with Christ that results in his being indwelled by the spirit, right?

And so the body member witness presupposes a firsthand experience with Christ and thus the indwelling spirit empowering us for witness. and our task, friends, is not to lecture about Jesus with philosophical detachment, it is to say I wanna share the Christ that I have seen and heard and touched with my life. Now this kind of careful witness must be more precious to you than your own life. It was for many. The word _____ which is the word for witness through the years came to mean martyr. Because so many times, when people were standing up for a witness for Christ, it cost them their life. More precious was their witness than their own life.

May God give us more men and more women and more missionaries and more teachers and preachers and laymen with the caliber of life who will witness effectively whatever the cost to their ego or their body. Yes, Christian witness comes all the way down from God, it passes through the Holy Spirit into your body and through you to a world where it gets bottled up at your body. As individuals, we are members of witness that communicate to this world, and your testimony will help or hinder the world in judging rightly about Jesus Christ.

So we see that our witness is to the world, of the Son, by the Father, through the spirit, in the individual member.

Lastly, critically, Christian witness is in the body. Total. Not only the individual member .5, but the total body, .6. Verse 27: "Ye", plural, "shall also bear witness". The spirit is the power of witness, and he indwells each member, right? we just covered that, didn't we. But you know something, there is another dimension here that is fantastic. The Holy Spirit not only says I indwell every individual member, but the Holy Spirit says I also indwell the entire collective body called the church. Why does he say that? I want you to look at Ephesians chapter 2 verse 14. Ephesians 2:14, tremendous truth in this portion. Listen. Ephesians 2:14, talking about Christ, Paul says, "for he is our peace who hath made both one" - that is Jew and Gentile- "broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity". That is the antagonism between Jew and Gentile, "even the law of commandments contained in ordinances to make in himself of two, one new man." Now watch this. verse 18, "For through him, we both have access by one spirit under the father", verse 21, "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple", and the total of the church is a temple just like your body is, verse 21, "in whom ye plural are built together for an _____ of God through the spirit".

Did you know that that verse teaches beyond doubt that the entire church body is the temple of the Holy Spirit just like your individual body is? You say you mean the Holy Spirit in a very real sense is indwelling the total body of Christ? That's right. and why do you think he is? In order that he might

carry the witness of the father planted in the body that we not only minister as members, but that we have a total body witness. do you see? The Holy Spirit is the powerful witness, and he indwells the body in the same sense he indwells the member that the body might also witness.

You say well how can the body witness? I mean, how can all Christians have a collective one single witness? you know and I say this honestly before the Lord, I believe this church has a collective witness. now we're not the total body of Christ, we're one part. But I believe the world is beginning to perk up their ears a little bit about what's going on here. Because I think we're sending off some pretty unified vibrations. We're not there, by any means. But I think we have a little idea. let me give you this. there are two ways that the body witnesses in total. And we'll wrap it up with this. two ways the body witnesses. All of these are important.

First way, the body total indwelt by the spirit, we are as a total a habitation of the spirit, the body witnesses number one by being one. did you get that? We witness by our unity, don't we. John 17:20, the prayer of Christ, here it comes, "Neither pray I for these alone" - disciples - "but for them also who shall believe on me through their word" - listen - "that they all may be one as thou father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us", why? Why do we want to be one? "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me". do you see why we're supposed to be one? as a witness, aren't we. How does the body witness in total? By being one. you say we're not making it. right. the body witness is nil. The body witness is carnal, divided, strife, division, confusion. We are not one, friends. We are fragmented and sectioned and all over the place protecting our little world and our little ideas and oh this - I could go on about the ways this is being propagated. One little group hates another little group and this little group hates Billy Graham and this little group loves this guy and this little group doesn't like that little group - and then you've got some people who would do nothing more than come to church and pick other members of the body apart. Our testimony as one is nil. Jesus prayed that we might witness to the world in unity. I pray that for this church our theme for this year is one word, isn't it - one. that's our theme for this year - for every year, for that matter. we can witness as a body by being one. and we haven't begun to see what God can do with this church alone if we will really be one, through the spirit.

That's why the spirit indwells all of us, so that our witness might be a total unified witness of one. if the world could see us as one, what an impact. But they see Christianity all fractioned and fragmented.

Second way the body witnesses is by love. Love. John 13:33, "Little children yet a little while I am with you, you shall seek me, and as I said unto the Jews where I go you cannot come so now I say to you" - now listen to this - "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you; that ye also love one another" - listen - "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another". We witness by our unity, secondly we witness by loving one another, don't we.

Listen, we could absolutely devastate this world if we could show them our concerted, unified, single love for each other. Oh what a witness that would be. And you know, friends, in that verse, verse 35, Jesus actually gives the world the right to judge us. it's a sobering thought, isn't it. he just says world, look at them. if they love, they're legitimate. Upon his authority he gave the world the right to judge whether you and I are really born again by whether or not we love our brothers. That's a pretty frightening thought. There are the keys to the body witness. one and love.

Now mark this friends, tonight as we close, will you? do you see it? you and I are the last link in the witness of the father. The witness comes from the father, through the spirit, into the member, out of the member, and out of the body. We're the last link. It started with the father about the son through the spirit came to us, we're the last link in the witness to Jesus Christ.

Let's pray God that the testimony of Jesus Christ; will not break down at this level. Do your part as a member to witness individually. Do your part for the body to create one by ministering your spiritual gift, and by loving. Then the ministry and the mission of the father in sending the son will come to pass as God intended. When we minister, and witness as members and as a body. There's a world to be won, it will begin to be won when we are one. and really not until.

Father, we thank you tonight for teaching us truths from your word. We thank you that you want to glorify the son, that you sent the spirit to glorify the son, that you put the spirit within us to glorify the son, God truthfully, in our hearts, we do not want your witness to break down with us. we do not wanna break the chain. We wanna carry on the witness as members individually, giving testimony to Christ Jesus, and Lord how we want to witness as a body, oh what an impact we could have if we were truly one. practically as we are in position. Oh we would desire to answer the prayer of Jesus Christ as we be one. we're a body for witness, we are members for witness. that's our purpose. God help us to see it, and not let that chain of witness collapse at us.

Lord I pray that you'll speak to every heart of every Christian here tonight, that we might be tremendously impressed and burdened with the truth of witness. giving the testimony to the world of the son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God, give us courage, boldness, through the spirit, to witness as members and as a body, one in life, to the world that cannot see and cannot understand without our witness.

Father we pray that these thoughts shall find lodging in our hearts. In Christ's name, Amen.

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