

Podcast 301 Bear Witness of Me

Scott Moore: Welcome to the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve, how are you today?

Steve: Good thanks. I just did my last face-to-face conference for 2021. It was a men's conference in Syracuse, New York. It went really well, and my son John—for those of you that don't know, he has Down's Syndrome, is thirty-four and loves to go to conferences. He was a champ. You probably saw it on Facebook; I posted pictures.

Steve: When we checked into the hotel, he unpacked his stuff and set out his clothes for the next day. I had to wake him up early in the morning because this was a morning conference, and we had to be there before eight. He got up like a champ and carefully packed then we found some breakfast, and went over to the conference, where he helped me set up.

He is a networker though. He's walking up to everybody, talking, shaking their hand, introducing himself. At the end of my second workshop—he didn't want to speak at the first one, I could see him getting his papers ready. He stood up and I asked the men if they wouldn't mind staying a few minutes, and they were wonderful. He passed around his signup sheet for the newsletter, and then he started giving away free gifts! He gave away several of my books, which is what I do when I speak. I had guys later coming up and asking—"Want me to pay for that?" I said "No, it's a gift!" He also gave out Demme Learning samples.

Steve: Then he introduced himself and told everybody he had four brothers, and that I was his father and he was my son. After a few minutes, there was a little pause, and I clapped, then everybody else clapped, and he bowed, and he was all set. It was very special.

Scott: Sounds like a good conference.

Steve: Yeah, it was. John is so gregarious. I couldn't get him to help me pack up, though, because he was talking to the other vendors, especially the guys from Trail Life, which is like a Christian Boy Scouts. He loved their uniforms.

Steve: Today we're going to talk today about how the Scriptures, and John, and the Father, bear witness to Jesus. We've been talking about the wonderful inspired Scriptures that are eternal. Heaven and earth are going to pass away, but God's Word is not going pass away, and every word of God is going to be fulfilled to the letter.

Let's pray: Father, help us today as we consider this topic, and help us to see how everything is pointing to Jesus. This is what we're going to see when we get out of this earth, so to speak; we get in Heaven, we're going to see what a place of preeminence the Son has. We see it in Revelation, where they're gathered around the throne, worshipping the Lamb. But I pray that You help us today, as we consider Your Word, to see Jesus in a special way. In Jesus' name, amen.

Steve: John 5:33–37 "You sent to John, and he has borne witness"—hold those words in your mind—"born witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about Me that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me has himself **borne witness** about Me."

Probably one of the greatest declarations in the history of the world is when John bears witness to Jesus and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) I think the Spirit of God came upon him, and it burst from him; and he declared, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Jesus is reminding them that these people had the witness of John, but also the works that He did. "These works have been bearing witness about me, that the Father sent me. And the Father Himself is bearing witness." (John 5:39). Two verses later from that passage, He said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that **bear witness** about Me." So we also have God's word bearing witness to Christ.

When Jesus says, "the Father Himself has borne witness about me" several times, at His baptism, and later on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father says, "This is My Son." At the baptism He adds, "who brings Me great joy." And then then on the Mount of Transfiguration He says, "Listen to Him!" It doesn't get much clearer than that.

The word witness, or bear witness, or testify, in Greek is *martureo*, which should ring a little bell. It's where we get the word martyr. The word *martureo*, or *marturia*, which is the noun and means "testimony"—they both come from *martus*, which means "witness" or "witnesses." Seven times that word is used in John chapter 5.

Martyrs lost their life bearing witness to Jesus—martyrs that stood up in front of crowds, governments, rulers, persecutors, and they testify, "Jesus is the Son of God," just like John did: "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, "Tarry in Jerusalem" to His disciples, and then He says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When we hear "martyr" there's a part of us that gulps. Do I really have what it takes? But the first part of this verse gives us the key: the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and then you will receive what you need to be able to stand for me. May God help us to mix that Scripture with faith, help us to believe that, because the Spirit of God is going to come upon us in special ways. We're going to be able to burst forth like John and declare things.

Jesus in the gospels instructs us that when you're called before rulers, you don't have to plan this all out and have a five-point outline! The Spirit of God will give you what

you need in that hour. So count on the Spirit of God speaking through you.

John 5:36: "The testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, **bear witness** about Me." These people saw Jesus doing things. I really enjoy the account in Acts where the blind man is before the educated rulers. And they're asking him questions, and he says, "Have you ever heard of anybody restoring people that are blind from birth?" He says, "Don't you see?" And they said, "Are you instructing us?" This simple, humble blind man, put his finger right on it! Jesus has been doing works that have never been done before, and these works bear witness that He is the Son of God.

John 10:25: "Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name **bear witness** about me. " I like this expression—John 12:17: "The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to **bear witness**." They saw something that was phenomenal! He's raising the dead! And they continued to tell their friends and their neighbors, and so much so, that the religious leaders were not happy. This is what you and I need to be continuing to do: talk about what we have seen.

The Helper also bears witness about the Son of God in John 15:26–27. "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who proceeds from the Father, He will **bear witness** about Me. And you also will **bear witness**, because you have been with Me from the beginning." The Spirit of God is pointing people to Jesus.

It's the Spirit of God that convicts us of sin; it's the Spirit of God that has authored the Word of God, which is pointing to Jesus; it's the Spirit of God that's going to help us to bear witness ourselves when we're called before perhaps rulers and persecutors; To the the apostles and disciples who observed these things firsthand He says, "And you also will bear witness because you've been with me from the beginning."

I like what John says about himself. He's wrapping up the Gospel of John 21:24, "This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true."

Revelation 1, the first two verses: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to His servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw."

The whole book of Revelation is a big witness to Jesus. John bore witness to what he saw, and it was the angel that God sent, who took John by the hand, so to speak, and showed him all these things. John is simply agreeing with what he saw and writing it down, and he is bearing witness. Notice those two words and expressions: bore witness, testimony. Testimony or witness.

Peter, one of those people who would live with Jesus, says in Acts chapter 10:39–43,

"We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him on the third day and made Him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Him after he rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."

I'm going to hold off my commentary until the next verse. Paul in Romans chapter 3:21–22 says, "the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although **the Law and the Prophets bear witness** to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

It wasn't just those in the New Testament, like John and Paul and Peter and the people that had watched him raise Lazarus from the dead, but the law and the prophets also bear witness. They're pointing to the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ. And we've said this many times, in Luke chapter 24, that wonderful Bible study where Jesus explained through the whole law and the prophets how He was the consummation of all that they'd been prophesying, all they'd been pointing to.

You and I are going to have opportunities, because it says in Luke chapter 21:10–13, "Then he said to them (Jesus), Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for My name's sake. This will be your opportunity to **bear witness**."

May God give us power through His Spirit to be faithful when we're called upon to join John and Peter the prophets who have gone before, and do our part. Revelation 12:11, "They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their **testimony**"—again, same word, martureo; martus is the bottom line root—"for they loved not their lives even unto death."

I hope that God will help me to love God so much, and love His word so much, that I will not love my life more. I want to be a faithful witness; I want to join those who have gone before and perhaps even be a martyr.

Revelation 20:4: "Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the **testimony** of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

I hope God gives me discernment, and I can tell when there's a mark coming. I don't want that mark. I don't want the mark of the beast, I don't want his image, I want

nothing to do with these enemies of God. And if it means losing my head, amen. I want to be faithful, I want to bear witness. I want to stand with Jesus.

This is what we're going to be called to do, and I think we're getting a little taste of it right now in our culture. Most people who are listening are in America. We have no idea what persecution is, but if you've ever seen data, persecution is already happening in many many parts of the world where people are standing for Jesus, being beheaded, bearing witness to the truth. I don't think it's going to escape us. I think it's going to happen on our own shores.

May God help us to be faithful, make us stand firm, keep our eyes on Jesus, and keep receiving power from the Holy Spirit. By His grace, we're going to be a part of a great company, so that when we get to Heaven, we can look around and see kindred spirits, people that in every age and time were faithful to Jesus. Who stood fast, and were willing to bear witness to the truth. Amen?

Steve: God made a tabernacle of witness in the wilderness. It's interesting that the same word 'witness' is used because I continue to see Jesus even more than I ever have before in what we would call the Old Testament. The old or first covenant continues to bear witness to Christ. The tabernacle bears witness to Christ, and the law and the prophets bear witness to Christ. May God give us revelation by His Spirit so we can see Jesus all through the Bible.

Scott: I take great comfort in that verse about the Spirit speaking through us when we're brought up before leaders and persecuted, because I'll think about what would I do in a situation like that, and I start to get a little stressed thinking about it, and then I remember that verse, and it's like, oh yeah, I don't have to worry about it.

Steve: I should have read the rest of that passage. I stopped in the thirteenth verse of Luke 21:14-19 where it says, "This will be your opportunity to bear witness." Let me go ahead and read the rest: "Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives." So sober and yet comforting, at the same time.

Scott: It's so kind of Jesus to say, "Make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves," cause then He says, "You will be betrayed by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death." How do you not worry about that?!

Scott: Oh, because He just said to make up your mind not to worry. And I, I mean there's gotta be faith there, or, you know, you'll just go into a frenzy, or you'll go schizophrenic with, "I can't worry; I've gotta worry! I can't worry; I'm worried, I'm

worried!" You know, like, but it's Jesus, so we can take Him at His word.

Steve: Amen. And you know, I like that this is our opportunity to bear witness. That's what got me this morning as I read that. I have notes, but you know certain things come out differently when you're reading them. And I think, am I really in the same league as John and Paul and John the Baptist and ...? They had their opportunity, and they were helped by God to be faithful, and I believe God will help us to be faithful when we have our opportunity to bear witness.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Father, thank you for this privilege. Most of us, part of us quakes when we read those words and hear those words spoken. And yet, You have told us, "This is your opportunity, and I will help you, and I'll give you words to say," and if You give us words to say, You're going to give us endurance to stand as well. So we count on You and we commit ourselves to You. Help us to be faithful to the end. Help us to be a clear witness. Help us to stand right now, in little ways, as we have opportunity to prepare for that day by being faithful in little things now. Help me to be faithful to Jesus and His name. Help me to continue to not be ashamed of You and Your words so that You won't be ashamed of me on that day. Help me to be faithful, in Jesus' name. Help us all to be faithful. Pour out your Spirit on all that are listening to these words today in a fresh way. In Jesus' name, amen.