

Text: John 5:16-30

Title: "Believe because the works of the Father and the works of the Son are the same works"

Time: 7/14/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The Fifth Amendment of the Bill of Rights of our nation's Constitution reads as follows: "No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

As citizens of the United States, this amendment to our Constitution protects us against double jeopardy, guarantees us the right to due process of law when we are accused of a crime, and provides for the review of a grand jury when law enforcement officials desire to bring an indictment against us. It guarantees our right to remain silent while in police custody or in court, and it protects us from having to incriminate ourselves.

The origins of the Fifth Amendment are traceable to the persecution of Puritans in England in the 17th century, which many fled when coming to America. It was common in those days for confessions to be coerced, even through torture. The silence of the accused was often considered an admission of guilt.

Our Savoir confronts His would-be persecutors in our passage (v. 18a). When our text says that Jesus *answered* (v. 17), it uses

a legal term. In a Jewish court of law, truth had to be established by two witnesses, not merely one (John 8:17). It is in this sense that Jesus's testimony as a Jewish man could not be validated on its own (v. 31). Our Lord deals with that issue in the rest of the chapter, where we learn that we must believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believe on His name because of the other authoritative validating witnesses to His claim to divine Sonship.

But in spite of this legal limitation, Jesus begins His defense by testifying authoritatively on His own behalf. He does not need to "plead the 5th" when facing His persecutors. Instead, He does the opposite. Three times He authoritatively pronounces: "Truly, truly, I say to You" (vv. 19, 24, 25). He does not remain silent, nor is He lying. He boldly tells the truth. Because Jesus is a Jewish man, other witnesses were necessary, but because Jesus is also God, He cannot lie, and we need to hear and heed His word on its own merits (v. 24).

That word communicates here a simple truth aligned with the purpose of John's Gospel: we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so have life in His name, because His work and the Father's work are the same work.

Our passage mentions three works, in which both the work of the Father and the work of the Son are the same work.

I. Their Sabbath work is the same (vv. 16-20a).

Illustration: A December article published by the Cleveland Clinic mentioned that it typically takes ten weeks for someone to break a bad habit (health.clevelandclinic.org/how-to-break-bad-habits). The article listed eleven things we need to do to break our bad habits, and #7 on the list is to replace bad habits with good ones. One suggestion was we learn to squeeze a stress ball instead of biting our nails.

Application: As John describes this conflict between Christ and His persecutors, he uses a form of verbs, which describes action that is habitual (v. 18, *had broken = was breaking; sought to kill = were seeking to kill*).

On the one hand, Jesus formed the habit of breaking the sabbath laws of the apostate Jewish religious establishment. He had healed the lame man of this chapter on the sabbath, and He had instructed him to pick up his bed and walk, a clear sabbath violation. Other Gospels tell us that He made a habit of this. In response, the Jewish religious establishment habitually sought to kill Him for this, a habit which they were never able to break, leading, of course, to the cross of Calvary.

I mentioned that the text uses a legal term in verse 17 when it tells us that Jesus *answered* for Himself. He gives His defense for His approach to the sabbath here, but He does so not as one who claims to be His own attorney, but rather as one who claims to be the final Judge in this highest courtroom. He makes His claim in two ways: (1) breaking the sabbath; and (2) claiming God was His own Father (v. 18).

Our verse actually tells us that Jesus *loosened* the sabbath. Westcott explains: "Literally, he *was loosing* (ἔλυε, Vulg. *solvet*), i.e. he declared that the law of the sabbath was not binding. The word (λύω) expresses not the violation of the sanctity of the day in a special case, but the abrogation of the duty of observance." In other words, Jesus was not merely breaking a Jewish law; He was deciding that the Jewish law in question did not have to be obeyed.

But even more offensive to the apostate Jew was Jesus's claim that He is equal with God. That same claim is rejected by apostate Christians today.

Jesus is equal with God in that both have always worked in the same sense on the sabbath (v. 17). They have done so with

a unique relationship as Father and Son. Jesus, as the Father's Son, never did anything unless His Father was also doing it (v. 19a), and the Son does everything that the Father does (v. 19b). All this happens because of the Father's special love for the Son (v. 20a).

Carson: "The only one who could conceivably do whatever the Father does must be as great as the Father, as divine as the Father" (251). Did the Father create the universe? So did the Son. Does the Father control and provide for the universe? So does the Son. Does the Father reveal Himself as the true God to humanity? So does the Son. Does the Father save from sin? So does the Son. Does the Father judge good and evil? So does the Son. Carson further observed: "The one who utters such things is to be dismissed with pity or scorn, or worshipped as Lord" (255).

No other man could make such a claim. It is in this lofty deified sense that the sabbath work of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are the same. For this reason, we must believe that Jesus is more than mere man. He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing we have life in His name.

Illustration: One of our neighbors had the unfortunate experience of trying to steal one of our "Summer Bible Camp" road signs just as I was driving by it on Thursday. I chased him down, and he apologized and put the sign back. I told him that in addition to his apology, he needed to join us for worship service on Sunday to make up for his dastardly deed. He said he would not because he is a Buddhist.

As bad as it may be to steal a church sign from its place on the road, it is far worse to fail to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and worthy of our worship on a Sunday morning. To my shame, I was disturbed more by the sign-stealing than the refusal to worship. I was wrong in that way because the sabbath work of the Father and of the Son are the same work.

II. Their life-giving work is the same (vv. 20b-21, 24-26).

Illustration: Do you know what it is to marvel at the works of God? His work of creation helps us do so. The heavens declare His glory and show His handiwork. His flowers of the field display more artistic talent than the craftsmen of Solomon's royal robes.

I marveled at God's work of providence last Thursday. What are the chances that a church-sign-thief would make his attempt just as the pastor of the church drives by? I could not help but rejoice over the truth of Psalm 121 as I contemplated that timing: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be removed [or thy sign]. He that keepeth thee shall not slumber."

Application: Moving on from the sabbath question, Jesus is going to mention two greater works that He and His Father are engaged in together. The first is good news for the sinner, and the second is bad news for the sinner, but both are designed to give the sinner the opportunity to marvel (v. 20b). Have we learned to marvel at God's works? Two separate epochs or hours are mentioned as important to each of these greater works. The first hour is both future and present from the perspective of Jesus (v. 25, "coming and now is"). The second hour is only future (v. 28, "coming").

This first greater work, the good news for the sinner, is the greater work of giving life (v. 21, *quickeneth* = *gives life*). This work works when the dead are given life by hearing Jesus's voice in the sense meant by verse 24. They hear Him as He calls them to repent and believe in the gospel, and they believe on Him as a personal Savior who died and rose again.

I believe that verse 26 refers to this resurrection of Christ when it says that the Father gave His Son to have life in Him-

self. This was the Father's guarantee that His Son's sacrifice would be accepted, and so death could not hold Him. Jesus knew not only that He was sent to die, but also that He was sent to rise again on the third day (Mt. 16:21). In this sense the Father gave the Son to have life in Himself, the power of His connection to the Father's love would sustain Him even through the Father's wrath against our sin.

And because of this victory of Jesus's life, spiritually dead people, separated from the Father, can live again at peace with Him. Marveling leads to hearing, and hearing leads to believing, and believing leads to life. Have you been given this life? Have you marveled, heard, and believed in this way? The hour for this greater work is now, says Jesus.

If you do not receive this first greater work of the Father and the Son by faith, you will be forced to experience their second greater work, which Jesus warns about here.

III. Their judging work is the same (vv. 22-23, 27-30).

Application: These Jewish leaders would have known about God's judging work from the book of Daniel. The words of Christ in verse 29 would have brought their minds immediately to the promise of Daniel 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall wake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

And the title Jesus claims for Himself in verse 27, the Son of Man, would have made them think immediately of Daniel 7:13-14, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Illustration: On most days of the week, I walk up Hooper Hill and then down Cemetery Hill. Cemetery Hill, of course, is populated with many tombstones telling us who has been placed in each grave over the years. The tombstones are not lying. We accept the truth of what they say.

But we know from Scripture that it is only the decaying body of those so named that is still there. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgement" (Heb. 9:27). For believers, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). For unbelievers, to be absent from the body is to be where the thirsty rich man of Luke 16 found himself, in a place of flame-induced torment, hoping for a drop of water to cool his tongue and that someone would keep his beloved brothers from following him there (Luke 16:24-28).

But the day of the final judgment of the living and the dead is yet future, when resurrected body and soul are reunited in the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation. There is a special sense in which this final judgment is authorized by the Father, but executed only by the Son (v. 22).

John 3:17 speaks of the Father's purpose in the Son's mission, "For God [the Father] sent not His Son into the world to condemn [judge] the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." Had the Father taken judgment into His own hands, there would be no hope for us. But because He put our final judgment into the hands of the Son, who died to save us from our sins, we have hope in Him. This purpose is restated in verse 23 of our passage - "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hat sent Him."

To fail to honor the Son as the One sent by the Father's love to save us from our sin is to fail to pass from death unto life. This work of judgment is given to the Son, because it is determined by whether we will honor Him as Savior.

Conclusion: And so, all men have this choice before them. The Jews of this passage make their choice (v. 18). They remain the practitioners of the evil of v. 29. They have no part in the resurrection of those whose lives of faith produce good things by God's life-giving work.

What will we decide about this man, who abolished the Jewish sabbath of His day, who made Himself equal with God, and whose works were the same as the Father's works? Will we repent of our unbelief by believing that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have Him give us life in His name? Or will we find that rather than our Life-giver, He is to be our final judge? Will we marvel, hear, and believe?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching