

Who Are We? Part 3

by Stephen Kaung

Our identity is in Christ Jesus, and our testimony is of Christ, like John the Baptist, we are a voice, but also a practice for the Lord.

Duration: 58:34

Scripture: John 1:29, John 1:33

Topics: "Identity in Christ", "Testimony of the Church"

Description

Stephen Kaung emphasizes the identity of believers as being rooted in Christ, rather than in themselves, highlighting that true testimony comes from knowing Jesus through the Holy Spirit. He reflects on John the Baptist's role as a voice preparing the way for Christ, illustrating that the church's purpose is to gather under the authority of Jesus and bear witness to His identity as the Lamb of God and the baptizer with the Holy Spirit. Kaung urges the congregation to recognize their testimony as centered on Christ, encouraging unity among believers and a commitment to proclaiming the truth of Jesus in a world filled with division.

Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to John, chapter 1. We'll begin with verse 29. From 29 through 34. John, chapter 1, 29.

On the morrow, he sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He it is of whom I said, A man comes after me, who takes a place before me, because he was before me. And I knew him not, but that he might be manifested to Israel.

Therefore have I come baptizing with water. And John bore witness, saying, I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not, but he who sent me to baptize with water, he said to me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him.

He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God. Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, as we continue in thy presence, we wait to hear thy word. We pray, Lord, that thou will open our hearts, our understanding, that thy word will really not only be understood, but will be received and will bear fruit unto yourself. Lord, thou knowest that we depend on thy Spirit completely.

Thou art the only one who is able to make things real and living. So, Lord, we humble ourselves before thee, trusting thy Holy Spirit to do this work for the glory of God. We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. We have been considering a few questions, and these questions to us are very basic. The first question that we had fellowship on is, who are we? In other words, is there an identification? What is our identity as a people? We who are gathering together here, who are we? Again, we will say that we do not like to talk about ourselves because, as a matter of fact, there is nothing to talk about.

Nothing but bad. But, thank God, we have everything to talk about one, whom we believe in, even our Lord Jesus. So, when we are talking about who are we, our identification, thank God, by His mercy, we find our identification, not in ourselves, but in Christ Jesus.

We are identified to be known only in Him. And if there is anything known outside of Him, it will be a stumbling block, because we have nothing to boast of. So, dear brothers and sisters, our attention, when we talk about who are we, are not directed to ourselves, but actually are directed to Christ.

We want to find ourselves in Christ, and we want to see one another in Christ. This will be our identity. And then, secondly, we talk about why do we so gather? There are so many Christian gatherings all around the world, all around this city.

Why is it that we shall add one more? Do we have the right to do that? Thank God, our Lord Jesus said, I will build my church on this rock, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. In other words, we are saved one by one, individually, personally. But when He saves us, it is not His will that we should live as independent, individual believers, because His purpose is, He wants to build us together as His church, as His body.

So the very meaning of the church is, call out ones gathered together. Unfortunately, we find that today, God's people are gathered together, but they're gathered together under many names. And because of these many names, God's people are divided.

So by the grace of God, we feel that God wants us to come out of all divisions and return to that oneness, that unity of the body of Christ. And more than that, we feel that it is the will of God that we should come out of all different names and come under only one name, the name of our Lord Jesus. Where two or three are gathered together under my name, says the Lord, there am I in the midst of them.

And we do hope that when we gather together under His name, it is not just an outward thing. It is our heart's desire that when we gather together under His name, we put ourselves under His authority. By the grace of God, we want to hold Him as the head and all who are the Lord's as members one of another in this wonderful body of Christ.

We dare not deny His name, and we want to keep His word. That's why we are so gathered. And this morning, we would like to come into the third question.

What is our testimony? We use John the Baptist as an example. John the Baptist knew who he was not, and he knew who he was. He was but a voice preparing the way of the Lord.

And likewise, we feel we are but a voice. Nothing. But the message is important.

The Lord. Not only John the Baptist knew who he was not and who he was, he practiced baptism. And when he was questioned, by what right do you practice baptism? You baptize people in water.

You are not the Christ. You are not Elijah. You are not the prophet.

What right do you have to do such a thing? And John the Baptist said, I baptize with water in order to prepare the way of the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In other words, he was not just a voice. He also practiced baptism.

His voice witnessed to Christ, and his practice prepares the way for the Lord. So, brothers and sisters, likewise, we are but a voice, but we do gather together as a practice for the Lord. Now, the Bible tells us on the morrow, he sees Jesus coming to him.

Now, when you read the word, actually on the morrow does not refer to the morrow to the next day after our Lord's baptism. Because when you first read it, it looks like it. In the preceding verses, when John was practicing baptism and when he was being questioned, actually the Lord was there.

So John said, there is one who stands in your midst. You do not know him, and I'm not even worthy to unloose his show strings. By the providence of God, when these people questioned John, it was at the same time when Jesus came to be baptized.

But after our Lord Jesus was baptized, he was sent by the Holy Spirit to the wilderness to be tempted of the devil 40 days, 40 nights. So on the morrow simply means on the morrow after he returned from the wilderness, from temptation. So when John saw him coming, John said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He it is of whom I said, a man comes after me who takes a place before me, for he was before me. So there you'll find the testimony of John. He testified, he witnessed for Christ.

You know, in a sense, John and our Lord Jesus, they are kinsmen, relatives. And even though they grew up in different cities, I think it is natural that they have heard of each other. They might have met each other before.

So how can John say that I knew him not, but now I know him? What is it? Now naturally, physically, most likely they knew each other. And you remember even when Mary visited Elizabeth, saluted Elizabeth, John who was in the womb of Mary, he jumped. He responded because even when he was in the womb, he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And when Jesus came to be baptized of him, you remember how he refused to do that. He said, I should be baptized by you. In a sense, by the Spirit in him, he says he is a man who is perfect.

He can sense it in his spirit. But he still says, I knew him not, not until he baptized our Lord Jesus. And our Lord Jesus came out of the water, and heaven was open, and there was a voice, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

And he saw the Holy Spirit as a dove, descending and abiding in him. And the Holy Spirit told him, the one at home, the Spirit, Holy Spirit, descending and abiding, this is the one who was baptized with the Holy Spirit. And John said, I know him.

In other words, you find this knowing is not an external thing. This knowing is an inward knowing. It is a knowing by revelation.

It is a knowing in the Spirit. It is a knowing by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And this knowing, this kind of knowing, constitutes a testimony.

So brothers and sisters, when you come to the spiritual realm, the only way to bear testimony is that you have to see, and you have to hear, you have to experience, in your spirit. Not only outwardly, outward things, may constitute a testimony in the world, but inward seeing, that seeing by the Spirit of God, that constitutes a real testimony. And thank God, John knew the Lord Jesus by the Spirit.

And you find that his testimony of our Lord Jesus is full, because he testified, behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He testified that our Lord Jesus is the Lamb of God. You know, with the children of Israel, they have sacrificed thousands and thousands, countless lambs, through the years.

But here is the Lamb of God. This Lamb of God alone, not symbolically, but literally, spiritually, takes away the sin of the world. That is testimony of our Lord Jesus.

And at the same time, he testified. He said, I came to baptize with water, but there is one among you who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. That's the real thing.

Baptizing with water is just a preparation. But baptizing with the Holy Spirit brings in the real body of Christ. In one spirit, we were baptized into one body.

Whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bondmen or freemen, and we are all made to drink of one spirit. That's real. So John testified that our Lord Jesus is the baptizer with the Holy Spirit.

He could do this because he was told by God. And not only that, he also testified. He said he is the Son of God.

That is the person. He is so great that I'm not even worthy to untie his shoelaces. What a glorious person our Lord Jesus is.

More than that, in the Gospel of John, he also said, I'm but a friend of the bridegroom. When I hear the voice of the bridegroom, I'm happy. I must decrease, but he must increase.

He testified that our Lord Jesus is the bridegroom coming to seek and to find his bride, the church. So, brothers and sisters, you find that with John the Baptist, he had a full testimony. But his testimony is not of himself.

His testimony is of Christ. In a sense, he put down himself. Don't look at me as a great man.

I'm even not worthy to untie the shoelaces of the one who is coming. Oh, brothers and sisters, what a testimony John has testified of Christ. No wonder later on in the Gospel of John, you'll find people said, John has never done a miracle.

But what he said of the Lord is true. And many believed in the Lord Jesus. Brothers and sisters, what is our testimony? If you want to find the exact phrase, our testimony in the Bible, where can you find it? 2 Thessalonians 1.10. There you'll find Apostle Paul rode to the church in Thessalonica.

And he said, our testimony to you has been received. Paul and his fellow workers, they went to Thessalonica and they testified. And their testimony to these Thessalonians was received.

You remember the Apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth, he said in 1 Corinthians 2, verses 1 and 2, when I come to you, I do not come with excellency of words or wisdom to proclaim the testimony of God. When I come to you, I know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And again you'll find in 2 Corinthians 5, he said, we do not preach ourselves.

We preach Jesus Christ. And we are servants to you for Christ's sake. So brothers and sisters, what is our testimony? What is the testimony of the church? The testimony is about the Lord Jesus.

That's the testimony. Nothing else. And in the word of God, you'll find another term.

The testimony of God. Now in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 1, you can find that term. Paul said, we come to you to announce the testimony of God.

Now what is the testimony of God? What does God testify? Our brother during the worship time mentioned Hebrews 1, verse 1. God has spoken. He has testified. He has revealed himself.

He tells us something that is in his heart. In many ways, in many parts, to our fathers through the prophets. In other words, they refer to the Old Testament.

There we find God has spoken. He is saying something, testifying something. And you remember, in John chapter 5, verse 39, 40, our Lord Jesus said, you search the Scripture.

That is the Old Testament. You search the Scripture thinking that in it you can find eternal life. But the Scripture, all that is written is concerning me.

But you do not want to come to me and receive life. So brothers and sisters, what is the testimony of God? The testimony of God is none other but what God testifies of his beloved son. Look at my son.

And when you read the Old Testament prophets, you will find the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. Our Lord Jesus when, after he was resurrected from the dead, you remember how he walked with the two disciples going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. He walked with them and he talked with them and he opened up from Moses to Psalms, the Old Testament.

Telling them that these must be fulfilled because Christ must suffer and then be glorified. And then afterwards he met with the disciples in the room in Jerusalem and he also opened their understanding from Moses, Psalms, the prophets. Everything that needs to be fulfilled in him.

In other words, the testimony of God is concerning his son. Look at my son. See what my son is.

Believe in him. Trust in him. He is everything.

And even when our Lord Jesus was in the flesh, three times the heavens opened. You know because of the sin of this world, heaven was closed to the world. But in Christ Jesus, heaven was open.

And God said, this is my beloved son in whom I have found my delight. Both at his baptism on the Mount of Transfiguration and then when some Greeks want to see the Lord in John chapter 12, the heaven opened and said, I have glorified myself and I will be glorified. In other words, God the Father testifies of

his son.

And that testimony is what the apostles announced to the people in Corinth. So brothers and sisters, what is our testimony? Our testimony is none other but what God testifies of his son. In other words, it is the testimony of Jesus.

Now you'll find in the scripture the term the testimony of Jesus, especially in the book of Revelation. A number of times there. What is the testimony of Jesus? What does our Lord Jesus testify of himself? You know, when you and I testify of ourselves, people will not believe it.

And they have every reason not to believe it because our hearts are deceitful above all things. So wicked. We may testify ourselves as so good, so proud of ourselves, but it's not true.

Or we may even try to be humble and satisfied so bad, it may not be bad enough. God knows how bad we are. We don't know.

So the Pharisees said, If you testify of yourself, your testimony is not true. They even said that to Jesus. But you know what our Lord Jesus said in John chapter 8? He said, You don't.

So even though our Lord Jesus testified of himself, his testimony is trustworthy because he knows where he comes from and knows where he is going. Did you hear what he testified of himself? Even though all through his life on the earth, he humbled himself, he denied himself, he always said, I'm a saint. I do the will of him who sent me.

I cannot do anything by myself. He emptied himself. He took upon himself the form of a born slave and obedient unto the Father even unto death, the death of the cross.

And yet, he did testify of himself. You remember in John chapter 4, he talked to that Samaritan woman, a sinful woman. He revealed the life of that woman, bring that woman to repentance, to conviction.

And that woman said, when the Christ comes, when the Messiah comes, he will tell us everything. And you remember what Jesus said? The one who is talking with you is he. He acknowledged himself as the Christ, the Messiah, the sent one of God.

And that woman believed. He left the water pot. He went to the city and bear witness to our Lord Jesus.

Wonderful. Did he testify himself as the son of God? People often say, now are you the son of God? He said, I'm the son of man. But did he ever testify himself that he is the son of God? Yes.

In John chapter 9, that blind man born blind was healed by him. But because of this, he was cast out by the Jews. The Lord found him and said, do you believe in the son of God? He said, who is the son of God? The Lord said, you see him and he's talking with you.

And the blind man healed. Worship him. And said, I believe.

Yes. Our Lord himself said, he is the son of God. And his testimony is true.

In John chapter 10, he said the Father and I are one. The Jews understand it very clearly. So they want to stone him.

How dare you to equal yourself with God? But that's what he is. And his testimony is true. Brothers and sisters, when you read the book of John, the gospel of John, it's wonderful.

Because the other gospels record the history, outward history of our Lord Jesus. But the gospel of John reveals the inner secret of our Lord Jesus. In the gospel of John, how often he said, I am.

I think everyone that reads the gospel of John noticed that. I am. Now that is the name of God.

Because when Moses asked, now who are you? What is your name? How can I tell people about you? And you remember the Lord said, I am that I am. And in the gospel of John, how many times our Lord Jesus said, I am. I am the bread of life.

I am the light of the world. Before Abraham was, I am. I'm the resurrection and the life.

I'm the way, the truth and the life. And no one comes to the Father but by me. I'm the door.

I'm the good shepherd. I'm the vine. Brothers and sisters, the great I am.

Everything, all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly, all the fullness of God are in him. And he said, you are complete in me. That's the testimony.

So dear brothers and sisters, we have a testimony. What is the testimony of the church? God, our Lord Jesus, has entrusted himself and his testimony to the church. Just like in the Old Testament time, God entrusted his testimony to the children of Israel.

His name is given to them. They are the custodian of the testimony of God. But unfortunately, they fail in their testimony.

And you remember when the children of Israel were taken into Babylonian captivity. During those 70 years, God was only recognized as the God of heaven, but not the God of heaven and the earth. Why? Because on earth he has no testimony.

The temple was destroyed. The ark disappeared. There was no testimony.

In the New Testament time, our Lord Jesus entrusted his testimony to his gathering, to those who gathered together unto his name. They are the custodian of his testimony. They are the people who have the testimony of Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, we gather together for the sake of testifying that Jesus is Lord, that he is everything to us. We have nothing to say about ourselves, but we have everything to say about him. We believe that he is the first and the last and the living one.

He has come to die, and he has risen from the dead, and he lives forevermore, and he holds the keys of death and of Hades. That is his testimony. You remember your Revelation 1? He revealed himself with such a glorious vision, and then he testified of himself.

You know, when John saw that glorious vision of the Lord, I often think, John was the one who was closest to the Lord when the Lord was on earth. He even lay upon the bosom of the Lord. He knew the Lord so well.

Among all the apostles, probably he's the one who knew the Lord the best and so close to the Lord. But when our Lord Jesus in heaven revealed his glory to him, he fell down as one dead. Then our Lord touched him and said, Fear not.

I'm the first and the last and the living one. Brothers and sisters, is Christ the first? Not only in each of our individual lives, but is he the first in our gathering together? You know the disciples when they were with the Lord Jesus? They have a very basic problem in their midst. And what is it? They always quarrel with each other who is the first.

But the Lord said, I'm the first. Is he the first to each one of us? First in our life. First in our love.

First in our thought. First in our service. Everything he is first.

Is it true? Is our gathering testify that he is the first? We dare not take his place. Everything has to begin with him. And everything has to end with him.

Conclude in him. Because he is the last. He got everything.

Not that he is the first. I'm the first. I'm the second.

You're the third. It means first is everything. Because first and last includes everything.

He is not the first and leave you the last. Even the last, the end, is in him. Brothers and sisters, this is our Lord Jesus.

And do we recognize him as such? Again, we see the same principle. This is not to be known outwardly. Mentally.

Yes. Mentally I acknowledge he is the first and he is the last. But that's not true.

Unless it is something revealed to you. Unless the Holy Spirit not only revealed it to you but actually disciplined you into it. Brothers and sisters, naturally we want to be the first and the last.

It's natural with everyone. And it is only when God shall open our inner eyes and see, no, he is the first. No, he is the last.

He is everything. You are nothing. We need not only revelation but discipline.

The leading of God by his Spirit with the cross to bring us to nothing and allow Christ to be everything. Now that is testimony. And he is the living one.

Aside from him, everything is dead. Whatever comes from the world is dead. Whatever comes from myself is dead.

Shameful. But he is the living one. Glory.

You know, life is glory. Death is shameful. And he is the living one.

He is the resurrection and the life. And we need to know him as such. No longer I, but Christ liveth in me.

For me to live is Christ. I'm not worthy to live. I abhor myself.

Repent in dust and ashes when you see him. He is the first. He is the last.

He is the living one. Oh, brothers and sisters, what revelation and what discipline. That is the testimony entrusted to the Church.

That is why we gather. We are supposed to be the custodian of his testimony. But thank God he came and he died.

His death put death to death. His death will put sin to death. His death put me to death.

His death put the work of the enemy to death. To Satan to death. He put everything that is not of God to death.

But thank God that's not the end. He is risen from the dead. I am alive, he said, and live forevermore.

Life has conquered death. And this is our testimony. How his life in us conquered death.

And he holds the keys of death and Hades. That is, he is the victor of Calvary. He is able.

So, brothers and sisters, this testimony of our Lord Jesus has been entrusted to the Church. This is why he needs the Church on earth to be the bearer of his testimony. But unfortunately, you find the Church, like the children of Israel, failed in the testimony.

But even so, thank God, when you read the book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, you find the refrain, they have the testimony of Jesus. The word of God and the testimony of Jesus. John the Baptist, and John the Apostle, in his old age, he was exiled to the island of Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 1-9. During that period, there was apostasy already. Many fell, fallen away.

But here was John, exiled for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus was secured in him. Then you find, in chapter 6, when the fifth seal was opened, you find people who were martyred for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

They were under the altar. They were the martyrs of the ages. And they were willing to give up their life for the testimony of Jesus.

And how they were comforted just a little while. And they will be closed. Again, in chapter 12, you find a man-child.

A woman was travailing, and a red dragon was standing before her, waiting to swallow the man-child that was to be born. That woman represents the church in general. The church is in travail today.

Thank God, even in travail, it is positive because it is going to bring forth the man-child. Out of the trail, a man-child will be born. And Satan knew that this man-child will be his end.

So he wants to swallow him. But thank God, as soon as the man-child was born, he was taken. And there was war in the air, and Satan was thrown down to the earth.

Now, who were they? They were those who were washed by the blood of the Lamb, who had the word of the testimony. And they loved not their lives, even unto death. These are the overcomers.

They overcome, and they were faithful to the testimony of Jesus. Again in chapter 19, you remember the marriage, the news of the marriage, feast of the Lamb. And everything was so glorious that even John lost his head.

He bowed down and worshipped the angel who gave him the message. And the angel said, Don't do that. I am also a fellow, member of you and all the bondmen who have the testimony of Jesus.

Worship him. Because the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. Then again in chapter 20, you find there are those who are killed because of the testimony of Jesus.

They were on the throne. They were given power, service unto God. So, brothers and sisters, we are living in these last days.

You find confusion everywhere, division everywhere, struggle, strife everywhere. The testimony of Jesus has suffered so much by the grace of God in all humility, knowing that we are worse than anybody else. But by the grace of God, it is our heart desire that our gathering will bear only one testimony, the testimony of Jesus and nothing else.

Are we willing? Are we willing to pay the cost? Are we willing to lay down ourselves, seek nothing for ourselves, but everything for the Lord? It may mean martyrdom, as many of our brethren had gone through. But it must mean living martyrs. In order to maintain the testimony of Jesus, you have to be a living martyr.

It's costly. It costs our Lord Jesus his all, and he calls us to follow him wherever he goes. We are far from being true witnesses to that testimony of Jesus.

But this is our heart. This is our prayer. May the Lord answer us.

Shall we pray? Dear Lord, we do thank Thee that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Thee bodily, and we are complete in Thee. Lord, this is our testimony. You are all.

You are everything. O Lord, make it real in each one of us. We dare not be false witnesses.

We want to be true. Witnesses of our dear Lord. In Thy precious name we pray.

Amen.

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