

Who's Your Father? John 8:41-48

This is an incredible passage of Scripture where Jesus gives amazing truths and promises, and that is he is the light of the world, and also if you will believe in him then the truth will really set you free. And what do you need to be set free, because the Pharisees here see that they have always been free and have never been subject to anyone? And they need to be free from the penalty and also the tyranny or control of sin in their lives through the life giving and liberating truths of Jesus. They come back and say that they are the children of Abraham so they do not need what Jesus is offering. They have standing in God's sight through natural birth. But Jesus says all you have to do is look at your actions and they demonstrate that you are not children of Abraham or of God. They sought to kill him but Abraham not only listen to Jesus but welcomed him in.

And look at verse 41, **"You are doing the works your father did.' They said to him, 'We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.'"** You can feel the tension and even the rhetoric going up and up in this passage. It started out civil but now the language is becoming more and more heated. Jesus reminds them of the truth that they are doing the work of their father speaking of spiritual lineage, or another way of saying it, that they are doing the works of the devil himself. And this passage does a couple of things. One is that Jesus is showing them very accurately their spiritual condition and their slavery to sin through their response to his ministry. No one comes to Christ unless they see their need; unless they see their sin. But secondly because they are unrepentant sinners, this debate or conversation hardens the Pharisees in their disposition against Jesus that will lead to the cross. Jesus is sovereign here and although giving grace, still pushes toward that end where he will give his life as that perfect offering for even men as we see in this passage.

But their anger and defiance against the message of Jesus has now become accusatory. You want to talk about parentage, okay we will talk about it. Everyone knew something of the events about Jesus' birth, but certainly would not have believed in the virgin birth, so he must have had an illegitimate birth. Mary must have been unfaithful to not only Joseph during that betrothal period, but more importantly to God. There is no way that you can come from God. Now instead of Abraham as father they claim God as their Father. They came through legitimate birth. The reason for the change in language is that the Jews found the thought of Jesus that they were not children of God as repulsive and inflammatory. Who are you to question us? Look at your birth. We are the true children of God.

It is in a conversation like this that we try to bring down the heightened emotion, or an argument, but Jesus is calm and rational, and he will not water down the truth and stays on point, and he wants these men to see their sin and need. Look at verses 42-43, **"Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.'"** Jesus doesn't go for their emotional appeal but comes right back that their actions betray who their true spiritual parent is. He says that they should love him. And

the meaning is more than emotions. They should have had a commitment and loyalty to him. If they have God as their Father then they would have recognized that Jesus came from the Father. Then he asks the question - **“Why do you not understand what I say?”** And Jesus is not mystified but answers the question - **“It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.”** This speaks of their spiritual inability to believe and trust in Christ. They not only will not believe but they cannot believe and accept and trust in the message of Christ.

And what follows is a description of Satan. And it is incredible to see that most believers do one of two things. One is that they down play the significance of Satan as he does not exist. We often feel embarrassed when we talk about him. But we realize Jesus here has no problem talking about Satan. And our battle, our greatest battle in this life is spiritual. Ephesians 6:12 says, **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”** At the other end of the spectrum are believers who see Satan behind every sin that they do, and they give the impression that they would not do the things that they do if it was not for him. He is responsible but they are not. But here Jesus is not explaining Satan's hold on the religious leaders but he is explaining their fallen human condition and why they are seeking to kill him. It is because of their nature that is after the likeness of Satan and not after the likeness of God. And we are all responsible for the things that we do in this life. And as believers we need to recognize our sin and seek to turn from it. In this life we are seeking through God to be transformed away from the world and into the likeness of Christ. But this explains the rejection of Jesus in this world but even our struggle with sin. We want to blame Satan or Covid or someone else for the sin in our lives. And again, when we examine our lives, we can see who we truly belong to. So we need to see who Satan is and then examine our own lives.

1. We need to see who Satan is. **V. 44.**

So here is the question: if Abraham is not their father and God is not their father then who is? And you cannot get more forceful than the words of Jesus. You cannot get more clear than what he says in this passage. You can almost imagine the grinding of teeth and clenched fists as they listen to the words of Jesus. And truth is truth. You can ignore it or you can declare it. Jesus declares it to these men, knowing in the end it will harden them in their disposition to crucify him. In this passage it is almost all about the bad news, and not the good news? Why? It is because you cannot even get to the good news without accepting the bad news.

But look how verse 44 begins, **“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.”** These are shocking words. You are of your father the devil. This is not the way to make friends. But he backs it up by saying that your will is to do his desires. It is amazing because he is talking about our natural selfish and sinful heart. When Adam and Eve fell in the garden a curse came on all, and now all have this sinful nature that speaks of that fall where Satan tempted Adam and Eve and they fell. We do what we do because of our natures, or because of our desires. We want to blame something external or someone else of why we envy, or hate, or are bitter, or lust

or whatever. It is someone else's fault. Here the problem is their father's desires have been passed on to the children.

Well what are those desires? He basically describes these two desires in two ways. The first is in the next clause, **"he was a murderer from the beginning."** And this refers to the devil's goal right in the Garden to convince and question God's word. If you eat of the tree you will not surely die. You will be like God. And the whole goal is that not only Adam and Eve would die but all those after them - that they would not only die physically but also eternally. J.C. Ryle writes, **"His great aim and object is to ruin us for ever and kill our souls. To destroy, to rob us of eternal life, to bring us down to the second death in hell, are the things for which he is unceasingly working. He is ever going about, seeking whom he may devour."** And his activities have not changed. Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:8, **"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."**

Now how does he accomplish his objective of murder? And look how John continues, **"and does not stand in truth because there is no truth in him."** The meaning of "does not stand in truth" is that he cannot tolerate any truth, and the reason is that there is no truth in him. This explains our world and many of the lies that we hear where people call good evil and evil good. It also explains what is going on in the wider church where individuals say stop with the doctrine. Love unites but doctrine divides. There is a downplaying of truth and an over valuing of experience or some sort of feeling. Why? Because the devil hates truth. It is satanic opposition that hates truth. So the natural human and fallen heart like Satan hates truth. The exact opposite we see in this passage that Jesus promised for all who trust him, that truth doesn't shackle us but makes us free. Look at verses 31-32, **"So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** It is by knowing and abiding in the words of Christ.

And look how this verse ends off because this is the whole point, that who you are will come out. We see this with the great enemy our souls, **"When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."** He is crafty and many times his lies are outright and easy to detect but some are more subtle. But his lies come out. And before we were born again and came to trust Christ, we based our whole lives on his lies. And this should be easy to say - don't believe the lies of the devil. But so many are. So many think that the greatest problem they have today is not sin. Or some think that the word of God is not sufficient for life and godliness, but I need something more. You look at all the disorders, and excuses of behaviours out there and it is nothing less than a rejection of God and believing of subtle lies. It is not sin but some kind of genetic defect or disorder that I cannot help. God has given you the new birth - don't believe the devil's lies. Live in the freedom of God's word.

2. We need to see the application. **Vv. 45-47.**

The argument of Jesus is just impeccable. His logic here is beyond any doubt and destroys any argument to the contrary. How we respond to the words of Christ will reveal our hearts. It will reveal who we are at the deepest core of our being. You can try and deny it. You can try even to stone Jesus but you cannot change the fact that what

you do and how you respond to the word of God indicates most clearly who you are. One description that believers used to use to combat their sin in their lives was blame-shifting. We love to say that our lack of love to Christ is due to something or someone else. We blame something or someone else. If you see who Jesus is and who the devil is: who are you following? Which person most exemplifies your life?

Look at verse 45, **“But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.”** This is such a telling verse because we many times interpret it that even though I tell you, you still do not believe me, but this verse is connect to the last verse, which starts out, **“You are of your father the devil,”** and then ends, **“he is the father of lies.”** the first lie was spoken by him. Jesus in contrast speaks truth, but you do not believe me because of your spiritual parentage. If you would have been from God, then you would have believed the hard truth about your sinfulness and your need to trust and follow in me in order to have life. If I would have told you a lie that you are alright with the Father and he is so proud of you, you would have believed in me. It is the first lie that was spoken, “You will surely not die.” Everything is all right.

Look at what Jesus says next, **“Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?”** What an amazing statement by Jesus. He challenges them with two questions that should be apparent to all present. One is he challenges them to come up with some sin in his life. When they finally arrest him, this is something that they will struggle with and that is coming up with a legitimate charge and trying to make it stick. Look in his life and try to come up with any sin and name what he is guilty of before God. And the reason why this is so incredible is that first of all he asks it. For Jesus to ask this question is to say that I am just like God. I am perfectly holy and without blemish. There is none that can say that. Some might say that they are pretty good or better than most but none could challenge others to name a sin that they are guilty of. And the other thing that made this statement amazing is that Jesus knew when asking this question that they could not come up with anything, that he was and is guiltless and has perfectly done the will of the Father.

And so many have such high thoughts of Jesus, and might even concede that he is God in human flesh, but this is what makes the next question so astonishing, **“why do you not believe me?”** It is not because of lack of empirical evidence that Jesus was from God. He showed it by walking on water, feeding five thousand, healing ever disease and malady, stilling storms. The evidence was overwhelming. Even today, we know that the tomb was empty. It is historically verifiable. But here is the question Jesus asks, “why do you not believe me?” Listen to what Mark Johnston’s writes about this, **“It is not merely that life is muddied by ‘sins’ here and there, but that human life is literally under the control of an alien power, namely, the devil himself. The full horror of this is seen in the way that people under the domination of sin react to Jesus and his message.”** Please do not misunderstand that people do not reject Jesus because the truth is questionable, but they want to question the unquestionable truth because they do not want the clear, easy to see, logical truth of their spiritual condition. It gets right to the heart of our nature; right to the heart of unbelief.

Paul speaks of the natural man and who we were before God gave new life in Ephesians 2:1-3, **“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of**

the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” We were dead in trespasses and sins, and walked according to the prince of the power of the air. We were by nature the children of wrath.

Now look at the conclusion of this section in verse 47, **“Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”** This really ends this exchange with the religious leaders, and there could not be a more damning statement or conclusion. Whoever is from God hears the words of God. And the meaning here of “hear” is not just something where we hear but there is a response to that hearing. There is a believing on Jesus and a response to them words that he has spoken. If this is true, then the reason why the opponents of Jesus do not respond to his words is that they are not from God, but they are from the devil. They had believed a lie - hook, line and sinker - that being a child of God is through physical descent. That is what counted. But the reader of this gospel knows that is not the truth. Listen to John 1:12-13, **“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”** It is not through flesh and blood but through the will of the Father.

And you know the irony of this passage? The reason why they hate the Son is the whole reason why Jesus came. It is to save individuals who are shackled and lost in sin. It is for individuals who would rather believe a lie than the truth about God and Jesus. Many individuals never overcome a bad upbringing, but here is the amazing thing is that we can overcome our spiritual upbringing, and actually become a child of God. It is through hearing the words of Jesus, realize that he came because you and I have a need. We are sinners. Don't deny the obvious. Don't deny that your sin is an offense to God. But here is the amazing thing: even though you never loved him, he sent Jesus and Jesus came in love to save individuals like you and me. John 3:16 says, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”** Believe on him. Trust in Jesus that he came and took the punishment on himself. And come and follow Him.

You might argue against everything in this text that we looked at tonight but there is a reason why you would. It is not because of the faulty logic of the words of Jesus but it is as Proverbs 14:12 says, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”** You will try to think of a reason why to reject this message. And I have seen this passage enacted in many individuals lives. They have heard the gospel, been even challenged by it, but then they become more aggressive in their rejection of it. They hate the name of Jesus. Please, don't believe the lie of the devil. Today is the day to trust in him. And for all of us: listen to the words of Christ. Believe in them and follow Him. It is so easy to start to listen to other voices, but all those voices have a common voice. There are many lies but only one truth. They all find their source in the father of lies. Abide in the words of Christ. That truth will set you free from all lies.