

Who is Your Father?

As Jesus looked over the crowd of those who professed faith in Him, He made sure they knew the nature of True Disciples.

John 8:31-47

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” **33** They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. **35** The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **37** I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. **38** I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

You Are of Your Father the Devil

39 They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, **40** but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. **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.” **42** 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. **43** Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. **44** You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **45** But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. **46** Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? **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.”

I. True disciples are those who know they need freedom (vv. 31-38)

When Jesus gave His initial description of true discipleship (31-32), some of the Jews that were present became angry. The reason they became angry was because they did not view themselves as slaves and they resented Jesus for suggesting that they needed freedom. Now the ultimate reason they were angry was because they were blinded by their own self-righteousness. Jesus however told them that they were indeed slaves and their slavery was much worse than they could imagine. The shackles of slavery were not around their wrists or ankles but around their hearts. Jesus said anyone who commits/practices sin is a slave to sin and their ultimate destiny as slaves was eternal banishment from the House of God.

However, Jesus gave the remedy to the problem of slavery. He said whoever abides in Him will know Truth and Truth will set them free! Jesus was saying that if you come to Him as needy sinners, ‘I will make you free.’ Jesus says that He is Truth and if slaves come to Him, He will give them all the freedom that He enjoys as the only begotten Son of God. The only pre-requisite for such a freedom is actually admitting that you need it and Jesus alone provides it. Jesus says for us not to pretend that we aren't sinners, but rather to come to Him as those poor in spirit to receive an eternal freedom.

II. True disciples are those who obey and follow Jesus (vv. 39-41a)

Even after Jesus explained to them the issue of slavery and even gave them the remedy to the problem of their own slavery, the Jews persisted in their self-righteousness. They even began to debate Jesus on the grounds of son-ship and their spiritual heritage.

Jesus said to them ‘I know you are related to Abraham, but that doesn’t mean Abraham is your spiritual father or that his blessings are your blessings.’ The Jews didn’t understand that the voice Abraham heard and obeyed in the OT was actually the voice of Jesus. They also didn’t understand that the blessings of Abraham are not appropriated to others based on one’s spiritual heritage but rather through faith. While our spiritual heritage may be a blessing and while we may have great theology, this passage reminds us that Truth must be appropriated in our hearts. We know that the Truth has taken root in our hearts when we actually desire to obey and follow Jesus. While we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, a saving faith is never alone.

III. **True Disciples are those who love Jesus (vv. 41b- 42)**

In response to the Jews’ final argument “Our Father is God,” Jesus says that true sons and daughters of God will share the same affections that God has for Him—they will love Him. If one knows and identifies with God, one would also know and identify with Jesus. If one believes and loves God, one would believe in and love Jesus. The reason this is so is because Jesus and the Father are One. Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God. Therefore, you cannot be a true child of God and not be in love with Jesus.

Jesus says true disciples and therefore true children of God are those who abide in Jesus because they know they need freedom, obey and follow Jesus, and are in love with Him. Jesus finishes this passage by saying if these things aren’t present, then one is still a slave and bound to the prince of this fallen world, Satan. In what is purposefully jarring, Jesus in His grace wants all His hearers to disbelieve the lie that there are multiple categories. There are only two realities for humanity: a child of God or a slave bound to Satan.

However, the great news of the Gospel is that the love of God is stronger than the powers of sin and Satan. Jesus lays down His own life not only so we may have freedom from such powers, but so we may also have an eternal home with Him in the House of God forever. All one must do is turn to Jesus for rescue!

Discussion Questions

1. When we are confronted by someone about the sin in our life, why do we typically respond with anger or a defensive posture?

2. What can we do that will help us move from a heart of self-righteousness to a heart of being “poor in spirit”?

3. What are some less-obvious sins and idols that East Memphians struggle with? How are they similar to the idols of the Pharisees in our passage?

4. In verse 39, Jesus said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did." What "works" is Jesus talking about?

5. Often times in our culture, being a "well-rounded" person is a positive and celebrated quality. Why would being called "well-rounded" be a negative as it relates to our Christian faith?