

“The Truth Will Set You Free” – Part 3

Introduction: (Read John 8:31-32) - The reference to God as “Father” is relatively rare in the OT (approximately 15xs and arguably) almost always in the context of the Fatherhood of God in relation to the nation of Israel. In John’s Gospel God is referred to as Father about 100 times most of which are Jesus referring to God as His own Father - in this chapter alone Jesus refers to God as His Father 10 times (Jesus refers to God as His Father – 8:16, 18, 19(3), 27, 28, 38, 49, 54). In addition, paternity based identity and behavior is referenced 10 more times (8:28b, 39, 41(2), 42, 44(2), 53, 56 - Satan as the father of lies 8:44c).

Note: It is implied in 8:20 that when Jesus referred to God as *His Father* it made the Jews want to kill Him (cf. also 8:40). Why? It is clear that in making such a claim Jesus was making Himself equal with God (cf. John 10:24-31, 32-33).

Note: Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God Incarnate is the basis of our true liberty of soul because it is as the Son of God Incarnate that He addresses the fundamental condition of our fallen-ness and the true nature of our bondage. Our bondage is deep within us – it is connected to our fundamental condition – separated from the life of God and spiritually dead we must be made alive – which means to be united again to or reconciled again to, or made partakers/sharers again of the life and love of God (cf. Genesis 3; Ephesians 2:1-7). Only something so powerful as this work of New Birth or New Creation can heal the fractured soul and set us free in the liberty of the children of God.

D.A. (Don) Carson, in his book, “A Call to Spiritual Reformation,” asks the question: “What is the most urgent need of the church in the western world today?” After walking through a series of answers one might offer he concludes, “The one thing we most urgently need in western Christendom is a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better.”¹ (See Torrance, pages 38-40; Russell, pages 13, 16-17).

Therefore the basis of our freedom/liberty given in John 8:31-32 is that the true Son of the Father sets us free when He makes us “sons” of the Father or brings us into the “life of God” – *when through Him we come to “know God.”* These are the implications of passages like Galatians 4:1-7; Romans 8:12-17. Throughout this passage Jesus walks the Jews through a discussion of true “paternity,” Divine Paternity – the fatherhood of God. This is experienced by us in the New Birth (“born again” – John 3:3 or “born of the Spirit” – 3:8) or when we are given “eternal life” (cf. John 17:1-5; 14:1-7, 15-23 etc.). This is the determining factor our “liberty.” The one who is made a son/child of God, in the “Son,” is made to experience true liberty/freedom from the bondage of soul.

As this dialogue progresses I want us to see how Jesus dismantles every claim of the Jews to privileged position/relationship with God – Abraham’s descendants (cf. 8:33-38); Abraham as

¹ Carson, “A Call to Spiritual Reformation,” p. 15

their father (cf. 8:39-41a); God as the Father of the nation, as the people of God (cf. 8:41b-47). The Jews were asserting liberty – the fix to our basic fallen condition - based in their unique national relationship to God. I want us to understand that Jesus is declaring that none of those things can take the place of ***knowing God – none of these can set the “slave” free. In fact, He is implying, as Paul makes clear, that those are the very things which they must confess as sin/bondage and from which they must repent if they would enter the freedom offered by the “Son” (cf. Philippians 3:1-12; 2 Corinthians 10:1-6).***

Transition: We pick up this week as the Jews respond to Jesus’ statement that their rejection of Him and His word – their desire to kill Him – is contrary to their claim that they are descendants of Abraham. He would say that they are, in fact, doing the bidding of their true father (cf. 8:38 - an inference of Satanic paternity, as will be made explicit –cf. 8:44). They move from claiming to be descendants of Abraham to claims that he is their father. - 8:39

Jesus Disputes the Jews’ Claim of Abrahamic Paternity (Fatherhood) – 8:39-41a

- Jesus disputes their claim that Abraham is their father by saying that their response to Him contradicts their claims to Abrahamic paternity. He/Abraham would never seek to kill someone who was speaking the truth which He had heard from God. He then repeats the accusation that they are doing the works of their true father. – 8:40-41a

- Their claim of Abrahamic Paternity, under the circumstances, serves only to confirm the implication that their bondage is to the will of the devil, whose character they truly reflect (cf. 8:40b-41a). ***Their response is to reach higher and at the same time to dig themselves a deeper hole – they attempt to stifle Jesus by claiming to have but one Father – God (8:41b).***

Jesus Disputes the Jews’ Claim That God Alone is Their Father – 8:41b-47

- The Jews argue that they are not born of fornication. They have but one father and the Father they claim is God – 8:41b. They quickly abandon Abrahamic paternity for the fatherhood of God. Jesus now has them right where He has been moving them all along.

- Jesus disputed their claim at a fundamental level; If God were their Father then they would love Jesus because He went out from God and stood before them as One sent from God, speaking the very words of God – as the one and only Son of the Father (Son par excellence) – 8:42.

- Jesus tells them that they do not know/understand His word - they are blind to the truth of His word - and they are ***not able to hear them, because*** they are children of the devil. He has blinded their minds “that they not see ***the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ***, who is the image of God” (cf. **2 Cor. 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3**; 8:43a, 45). ***As the devil’s offspring they “want” to do his will and they bear his image in all they do and say. He is, at his very core, a lying***

murderer. That is his essential being – his DNA, if you will. He passes that on to those who are his – 8:43-44.

- It is this bondage to sin of which Jesus speaks. It is a bondage born in our sharing in the fundamental rebellion of the devil through Adam – our fallen-ness. Freedom from such bondage requires a fundamental and true change in family relationship which only the Son can effect (cf. 8:34-36). It requires a change in paternity which is only possible in a New Birth – “You shall know the truth...” - 8:42, 45-47!! ***We cannot “know” the truth unless God is our Father – which is “to know” God!!***

Jesus Presses the Final Point of His Argument by Placing Abraham on the Continuum of Redemption Which Finds Its Ultimate Meaning/Purpose in Jesus’ Coming – 8:49-59

- The Jews are desperate because if Jesus is right their very world is crumbling – coming apart. So they flail about in their attempts to discredit Jesus/refute Jesus’ claims as they simply resort to calling Him names – 8:48.

- Jesus drives presses even harder when He responds by saying – I do not have a demon – I am honoring ***my Father***. As I honor ***my Father*** you dishonor me!! It is the Father with whom my honor rests – So, effectively you are blaspheming God and will face His judgment – 8:49-50.

- He then returns to the importance of “abiding in” His word or in this case “keeping” His word. First He promises liberty from sin and now eternal life – which is to know God and His Son – 8:51; cf. also 17:1-3.

- The Jews now believe that they have Him (a desperate attempt to retain their “world”)! The promise/claim Jesus has made that “the one who keeps” His word “will not see death, forever” proves that He has a demon or is crazy. They again appeal to Abraham and the prophets – they all have died. The obvious, no win, question for Jesus is asked – Are you greater than ***our father Abraham*** who has died...? Who are you making yourself out to be? – 8:52-53.

- Jesus turns their argument back on them when in answer to their indicting question He calls His Father to bear witness to His identity, “My Father glorifies me, Whom you say is your God.” You do not ***hear His word or keep His word because you do not know Him – He is not your Father as you claim!!*** Jesus then brings Abraham back into the discussion by declaring that Abraham himself understood that he occupied a place on the continuum of redemptive history in anticipation of the coming of the Son. Abraham joyfully anticipated Jesus’ arrival in history and now that it Jesus has come Abraham rejoices – 8:54-56.

- Now we are ready to understand the final exchange – the incredulity of the unbelieving Jews and the hope filled glory of the declaration of Jesus - 8:57-59.

- Paul is our pattern as one who was exactly like the Pharisees and the religious Jews, but unlike the Pharisees, he saw the glory of the Son and loved Him, he confessed his sin and repented of

everything upon which he depended for standing with God (cf. Philippians 3:1-12). It is in this declaration of repentance, as seen in Paul, which both addresses our fundamental fallen condition/bondage and sets the trajectory of life as those adopted into the family of God (Father, Son and Spirit), made “sons” of God, in the Son, and by the Spirit – made to share in the life and love of God – made “whole” again in Christ.

– We live now on that very same continuum of redemptive history as ambassadors of Christ – in His place – as we await the day of His return. We know that the world will respond to us, to our lives and our message, in the very same way the Jews responded to Jesus in John 8. Paul’s pattern of repentance anticipates a pattern and trajectory of life which reflects “abiding in His word” or living in this world as those who are made partakers of the life and love of God (John 14:1-7 etc.; 2 Corinthians 10:1-5; Philippians 1:20-21; 3:10-14, 20-21; 4:4-9, 11-13).

The degree to which we understand that this is a period of time and a place on the continuum of redemptive history, we will be free to “abide in His word/His love.” We then will *know Him* and enjoy the liberty of intimacy with the Father, in the Son, and by the Spirit which will both keep us here in His peace and enable us to live here with His purpose, “speaking the word and doing the work” we ourselves have seen *with the Father!!*