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My Disciples Indeed

Gospel of John, Part XXIX

John 8:31-47

Stuart W. Bryan

I. The Problem of Faith (cf. 2:23-25)

There is a difference between belief and belief, between disciples and disciples indeed. So what is the difference?

II. Discipleship, Sonship, Fatherhood

A. Disciples Indeed (31-32)

Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

True disciples *abide in Jesus' word*. So what does this mean? Its sense is twofold.

1. They *give unrestricted loyalty to Jesus' teaching*.
2. They *remain loyal to Jesus' word indefinitely*.

Jesus is not saying that these things *make us* disciples indeed; rather they _____ that we are such. *If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*

B. Abraham is our father! (33-41a)

Jesus' claim proves offensive. His hearers insist that as Abraham's physical offspring they have no fundamental need of Jesus' word. They may appreciate what He has been saying, but He shouldn't take His claims too far. Jesus responds that since these men are endeavoring to kill Him and refusing to listen to the truth, they are revealing that they are not true children of Abraham. They need the Son of God to set them free.

C. God is our Father (41b-47)

Jesus repudiates their claim to be children of God even as He repudiated their earlier claim to be children of Abraham. They are neither true children of Abraham nor true children of God. *If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.* Note well Jesus' simple argument: *If God were your Father, you would love Me; you do not love Me; therefore, God is not your Father.*

III. What is Your Patrimony?

A. Children of God and Children of the Devil (cf. Rom 1:18-19; Jn 1:10-13)

Why does Jesus distinguish between various types of “belief”? The reason is because there is something more fundamental than belief. Our beliefs are a reflection of our heart desires; the fruit of our core identity. *Who we are determines what we believe.*

Our fundamental problem as human beings is a heart problem. We are born slaves of sin and children of the devil. In theological terms, we are born with original sin. By nature, we are not able to hear the truth. Our only hope lies in the grace and mercy of God. William Temple writes, *“The [spiritual] state which occasions the need for conversion renders it impossible actually so to will. Conversion must be wrought in us, indeed; but it cannot be wrought by us; it is something done to us.”*

B. Like father, like son (1 Jn 3:7-11)

How can we distinguish between belief and belief? How can we know whether we are children of God or children of the devil? Jesus’ basic answer is that our patrimony reveals itself in our character.

So what is the character of the devil’s children? The child of the devil...

- 44 cf. 34, 37, 40, 41 – ...wants to do the desires of the devil (Deeds – Sin).
- 43, 45, 47 – ...will not listen to the truth (Words – Lies).

What is the character of God’s children? The child of God...

- 31 – ...treasures and obeys the voice of Jesus.
- 36 – ...is set free from the controlling power of sin.
- 39 – ...responds in humility to the truth of God.
- 42 – ...loves the Son of God, Jesus.
- 47 – ...listens to God’s voice.

C. Disciples Indeed

- *“If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.”*
Augustine
- We can get so fixated on the way somebody expresses the truth that we refuse to hear the truth they are speaking. Jesus teaches us to so treasure the truth that we give heed to it even when it comes in inglorious packages.
- If you could care less about what God’s word says and what it demands of you, then you should question whether you are a child of God.

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

1 John 3:7-11

IV. Conclusion