

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

False Assurance of the Religious

Scripture: John 8:37-47

Code: 43-47

I want you to open your Bible to John chapter 8, John chapter 8. I know they didn't know what I was going to preach on because I was so busy, I barely called anybody. So they just put kind of a blank in there. But, I do want to continue in John, and tonight continue in the Book of Acts.

People asked me whenever I get around military locations if I'm related to General Douglas MacArthur, and I am. It's a distant relationship, but yes, the answer is yes. One very kind young man there thought that I would be interested to know that there was a midshipman back in the '20s who was a nephew or something of the general, and there was some information about him, so he gave me a little envelope with some information about a Malcolm MacArthur, thought I might be interested, and had a little picture of his grave site with a little cross where he was buried, as he died while he was a midshipman at the academy.

You know, when you think about that, that matters a lot to people. Family, background matters. There's a whole website called Ancestry.com. I don't know if they bug you, but they pop up a lot in my little world saying, "Do you want to know about your ancestors?" Well, some people are fascinated by that. I guess people like to know that somebody, somewhere in the past was significant. They want to go back and see if they can find some earth-changing, culture-shifting, transformative life, or some novel person somewhere in the background. It kind of adds to our history a little bit, and makes us feel a little bit more significant if there was somebody back there somewhere. That just kind of appeals to the human need for significance.

Everybody has a family, and some of you aren't look at all past the generation past because it's not important to you, or you're afraid of what you might find. But we all have a family. Everybody's got a family. Everybody has family. That's how the world is divided up. We all also like a little bit of history about our people. You gave me a kind gift of Patricia and I taking a trip to Scotland because, you know, my people come from Scotland, and that's significant to me. That has bearing on my life, and that feeds into the history of who I am, and so knowing a little about my family and a little about sort of my national family, where I came from, people are proud to be Italian, and African American, and all of that. And there's wonderful history there, and it matters to them, and it's significant and important.

But you know, you can reduce the whole thing, the whole discussion down to really two families. Two families. Everybody's in one of two families. To just be simple and blunt, you're either in God's family or in the devil's family. That's as simple as it can be, and that's exactly what Jesus says in this text.

So let me read it to you. John 8:37 and following. "I know that you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I have seen with My Father, therefore you also do the things which you have heard from your father. They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you're seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. This Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication. We have one Father: God.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I'm saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks, he speaks a lie; he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.'"

Unmistakable. Two families, two fathers, two lines of descent. You're either from God, or from the devil. You know, I would assume that almost everybody in the world, if they believe in God, would see themselves as children of God. You could just about ask anyone if they've believed they're a child of God, and most would be likely to say yes. Because people want to think the best about themselves, and I think particularly religious people want to think the best about themselves, and these would be the ultra-extreme religionists who lived for the Old Testament, lived for the law of God, lived for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Who saw themselves as the paragons of religious virtue, and the gatekeepers for God's kingdom. To be told starkly that they are children of the devil would be something they had never, ever heard. And I would surmise, too, that it's likely something most people in our world have never heard. In fact, were I to say all of this that I'm going to say to you this morning, somewhere in some public venue where it could be broadcast, we couldn't calculate the uproar and the fury and the horror that would develop as a result of saying people are children of the devil. But that's exactly what Jesus says.

And you might ask the question: well why is He so blunt? Why is He so severe? Why doesn't He do what He did, for example, in Matthew 11 and say, "Come unto Me all the labored and the heavy laden. I'll give you rest." Why doesn't He say that? Why doesn't He talk about the promises, and hope, and why this? Well, the answer is, of course, that Jesus in Jerusalem now, six months from the end of his life, He's been preaching for two and a half years. He has been in direct confrontation with the Jewish leaders for the whole time of His ministry, starting when He attacked the temple to launch His ministry at the beginning. He has seen the attitude of the Jewish leaders harden into firm rejection. They resent Him. They hate Him. They want Him dead. Chapter 7 verse 1, they wanted to kill Him. Chapter 8 verse 59, by the time this discussion is over, they pick up stones to stone Him.

So, the stakes are very high. This is not a time to invite them to some, in some gentile way, to embrace the blessings of salvation. This is a time to warn them, because they are in severe danger, having made the conclusions they have made. And, by the way, one of their conclusions was that Jesus Himself was from the devil. And He tells them: the truth is, you are the devil's children. In direct confrontation with these Jewish leaders since the beginning of chapter 7 when He showed up in Jerusalem, and you remember that. He came for the feast. He came late. To sort of mitigate their fury a little bit, He settled in, found his way to the temple, He engages in conversations which have gone on through 7 and 8 with the leaders of the Jews, the Pharisees, and the people who are also gathered. They have completely rejected Him. They have definitively rejected Him. They have resolutely rejected Him.

And as the antagonism of these leaders has been elevated, so the directness and severity of Jesus' statements have increased. Because the stakes are getting higher all the time. The more they show Him hatred, the more He strikes piercing blows at their hypocrisy. This is mercy. Back in chapter 8 verse 20 to 24, He said, "You will die in your sins, and where I go, you can never come." Which is to say: I'm going to heaven; you're not. By the way, He said that. He came from heaven, and He would return to heaven. He had been telling them that. I'm going there; you're not. You're going to die in your sins. He never backs off as they harden against Him. He never slows up. He never tries to patronize them. He came to condemn sin; and the more open and blatant sin becomes, the more direct and devastating His condemnation becomes, because their eternal souls are at stake. This is a merciful warning. Merciful.

He has never said anything more devastating than what I just read to you. Never said anything more shocking, never said anything more offensive. Jewish leaders are so infuriated that, as I said, by the time you come to the end of the chapter, they start picking up rocks to crush out His life.

Now, it's critical that sin be confronted. And depending on the resistance of the sinner, to that confrontation, the confrontation has to be escalated. As you would do with anybody on the brink of severe danger, if they don't listen to the first call and the second call, you start elevating the extremity of the call, and the severity of the call, because of the imminent reality of the danger. And that's exactly what our Lord does, and it's a good model for us. I know it's hard to do that, but this is what the Bible does as well. When you go to the Book of Romans, for example, the apostle Paul, in Romans 1, 2, and 3, all the way to chapter 3 verse 22 is talking about how sinful man is. And chapter 1, it's the Gentiles, though they knew God, glorify Him not as God, but make idols, and follow a path that leads to fornication, homosexuality, a reprobate mind, and all kind of wretchedness. When they knew God, they glorify Him not as God, created their own gods. Even though he says in chapter 2 of Romans, the law of God is written in their hearts; they don't follow that law. Then in chapter 2, he also talks about the Jews in Romans, and he says, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly. So you have the law," he says, "You say we have the law. We are the keepers of the law. We are the guardians of

the law.” He says, “Because of you, the name of God is blasphemed among the nations.”

Little good it does for you to have the law. It doesn't mean anything. You're not true Jews. A true Jew is one who's one inwardly. And in chapter 3, He just gathers up everybody. There's none righteous. No, not one. And He renders, chapter 3 verse 19, “the whole world guilty.” The whole world guilty before God.

It was a passion for David Martyn Lloyd-Jones when he preached evangelistically, which he did a lot. He said, “Not only to tell the sinner he was guilty, but to prove that he was guilty.” And to prove it with such power and conviction that the sinner couldn't avoid it. And as a result of that, he was criticized for being harsh, and sometimes they said he was divisive and it was said of him that as his life progressed, he was gaining and losing influence at the same time. Well, of course. He was gaining influence with the people who loved the Word of God, and he was losing influence with the people who hated it. That's part of the responsibility. Even though he was a humble and meek man, and a quiet and humble man in private, he used to like to say, “logic on fire” when he opened up the Bible. And always a reasoned argument. Always a reasoned argument, and not some devotional thoughts, but a reasoned argument which, first of all, in an evangelistic context, was to demonstrate to the sinner the dire circumstances of his condition. Well, that he learned from our Lord because that's what our Lord did. And the apostles learned it, and Paul learned it, and Paul pulled no punches in Romans 1, 2, and 3. He sets up the whole book on the gospel by three chapters of indicting revelation about the sinfulness of sin.

Then, he says, by the deeds of the law, no one will be justified. So, this is your predicament, and you can't fix it on your own. A sinner needs to know that. There's no security in religion. There's no security in good works. There's no security in your heritage, whether it's a religious heritage like the Jews that comes down through some actual nationality, or whether it's a religious heritage that's passed down because your parents were Lutheran, or Presbyterian, or Baptist, or whatever. Only in Christ can sin be forgiven, and hell escaped. Only by believing in Christ. And that's what Jesus had been saying all along: believe, believe. John's called the Gospel of Belief, isn't it?

So, Jesus has been calling for them to believe, and they should believe because of His works, these incredible miracles going on every day. But it was His words that offended them, remember that? They wanted His works. Remember when He fed them in chapter 6. They said, “What do we do to work the works of God?” Can we get that power so we can create food, please? I mean, that would be phenomenal. So give us the power. He said, “You're not going to get that power. The only power you'll ever participate in is the power of salvation when you put your trust in Me.” They said, okay then, keep making food every day, every day, every day. So, it wasn't His works that offended them; it was His words. We talked about that.

And what were the words that offended them? He said He came from heaven. They didn't like that; they didn't accept that. He said He was the only source of spiritual life. They didn't like that. He said it was necessary to believe in Him. They didn't want to hear that. He told them they needed to be forgiven. They denied that. He told them they need to repent. They refused that. He told them they didn't know God. They didn't buy that. He told them they would die in their sins, and they mocked Him, and they laughed at that. Religious people in false religions never see themselves the way they really are. They're never really aware of their need. They think they're righteous.

So finally, it's reached a point where they're so hard that our Lord equals their hardness with the piercing statements of the reality of their condition. They were holding on to the fact they were the Jewish people, who came out of the loins of Abraham. They were sons of Abraham by physical descent. They were sons of Abraham by religious descent. They were children of God. And our Lord is going to just completely shatter those false securities.

You know, they banked on their physical descent as their protection. One rabbi put this way. You can read this in Jewish literature. "Abraham himself sits beside the gates of hell and does not permit any wicked Israelite to enter." Really? Being Jewish, then, keeps you out of hell, and that's kind of Abraham's job. Among the early church fathers, there was a Christian theologian named Justin Martyr, and he was arguing with a Jewish man in what is called the Dialogue of Trypho. Very interesting to read. And the Jewish man says this: "They who are the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient toward God, share in the eternal kingdom." So, being Jewish was a free pass. Free pass to do anything. You wouldn't end up in hell. When Jesus said you'll die, and your sins, and where I go, you can't come, He was saying in spite of what you believe and have been taught, you aren't going to heaven where I'm going; you're going to hell.

Jesus has to deal a deathblow to these false securities. Listen. Part of doing evangelism, part of being honest with the gospel is shattering false securities. You don't have to be brutal about it, but eventually, when there's enough resistance that keeps being put up, you've got to get serious about what you're talking on. And that's what our Lord does.

So, here we come to these verses, and I just want to kind of walk you through them a little into the narrative, and you'll begin to catch the flow. They have three claims they want to make, and they're progressive. First, they claim to be the physical seed of Abraham, which is true. Secondly, they claim to be the spiritual seed of Abraham, which is not true. And thirdly, they claim to be the children of God, which is not true. Jesus agrees with the first, and then just devastates the second two, stripping them of all their security. This is a very important issue when you're dealing with a sinner. Very important issue when you're dealing with a sinner.

I was talking to a man, just riding in the car with him. I was asking him some questions about his religious interests, and he told me that he went to a certain kind of religious environment. Some kind of Christian kind of traditional thing. He said, "I would never go anywhere else. I'd never go anywhere else. Never. Because I promised my mom, and she's dead, and I promised her I'd never, ever, ever go anywhere but this place." So I said, "What about your sins? What about forgiveness? This isn't about a place; this is about you and your sins, and your forgiveness. This is about heaven. This is not about going to a place here. This is about going to heaven when you're not here." A stone wall went up. Totally, a stone wall went up. So, what do you do when the stone wall goes up? You press the urgency of the reality. I said, "I'm talking about what happens when you're not here. I'm talking about your sins. I'm talking about forgiveness. I'm talking about eternal life."

So, that's exactly what our Lord does, and it's important to press this, and that's exactly what we see here. Number one, they claim to be Abraham's physical children. Go back to verse 33. In the prior conversation with the same people, our Lord was talking to them about truth and freedom, remember? "The truth shall make you free. If you continue My word, you're My true disciples." So, they say in verse 33, "We are Abraham's descendants." That ends the discussion.

Okay. "What are You talking about? We don't need You. We don't need Your message. We don't need information from You. We're Abraham's descendants. Don't you get it? Abraham's sitting at the edge of hell, preventing any of us from entering, no matter what we do. We're Abraham's children." So, He picks up on that claim that they made in verse 33 over in verse 37. "I know that you are Abraham's descendants." I know that. That's true. So there's an affirmation that the Jewish people have descended from the loins of Abraham. Abraham, you remember through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and down through the Abrahamic line that way as indicated all the way through history. And amazingly, even today. Their racial lines are wonderfully, historically, pure.

So, He acknowledges that you came from Abraham physically. I grant you that in a physical sense. You are actually the seed of Abraham. A couple times in Luke, I think it's Luke 13 and Luke 19, people are referred to as children of Abraham. So, that's absolutely true. The Jewish people came out of the loins of Abraham. As the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 promised, He would have a great nation, numbers of the sand of the sea, and the stars of the heaven. And that has progressed through history.

But, Jesus says, something's wrong here. "You seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak the things which I've seen with My father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." So, this is a big issue to them. Jesus is going to shift them away from thinking Abraham is their father, to thinking somebody else is their father. He doesn't say it yet. Okay, you're Abraham's children. That is spiritually useless. Useless. It's true, yes, and Paul says in Romans 9, you have the law, the prophets, the covenants, the adoption as sons. You have all the privileges of being Jewish people

descendant from Abraham. Romans 2, you have the law, you're stewards of the law, caretakers of the law. But it doesn't do anything because no man can be justified by the deeds of the law. Your descent from Abraham, spiritually speaking, means nothing, absolutely nothing.

Now, you have to understand that while that's just something we say and say, "Well, that's right." For them, this is shocking and beyond offensive. Beyond offensive. You can't claim Abrahamic descent spiritually, though you can claim it physically. You're not true sons of Abraham, therefore heirs of salvation, therefore possessors of the kingdom. Why? Back to verse 37: "You seek to kill Me, and My word has no place in you." Why is that important? Those two things are really important. "The things I speak are the things which I've seen with My Father. But you have no interest in what comes from My Father, who is God. You have an interest in the things that come from your father." Verse 39, they answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham." Do the deeds of Abraham.

Well, what are the deeds of Abraham? Well, go down to verse 56. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day." Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day. Bound up in the very Abrahamic covenant itself was the promise of a seed, right? Of a seed. Galatians says that. Abraham was looking forward to the one true sacrifice that was symbolized in the ram that was caught in the thicket that replaced Isaac's substitutionary sacrificial atonement. Abraham was looking ahead. Abraham was looking ahead to the day when final, full, and acceptable sacrifice would come. Abraham is a hero of faith. According to Hebrews chapter 11, "He died in faith, without having received the promise, but having seen them, and welcomed them from a distance."

"Abraham received Me. You reject Me. You're not a spiritual son of Abraham. That's the second point, now. We transitioned: yes, physical son of Abraham. That's true. Spiritual son? No. First, because Abraham saw My day and rejoiced. Abraham looked ahead to My day. You reject Me. You reject Me." There's even more there. There's even more than that. Do you remember in Genesis chapter 18 when Abraham and Sarah were at home one evening, and some angels showed up? Remember that? Genesis 18? And one of those angels turned out to be God. It's a theophany. This is God in physical presence. This is a Christophany. This is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. And what did Abraham do when the pre-incarnate Christ appeared? He received Him, embraced Him. They made a dinner. They had fellowship together. Read Genesis 18. Abraham actually received God into his house when God came down to earth. You have rejected Me, God who came down to earth. You're not Abraham's spiritual children. You've seen the fullness of it.

Abraham only saw a very limited shadow of it. He looked at a promise that wasn't fulfilled, and he got a glimpse, a preview. You've had the full story for three years, by the time they crucify Him. Furthermore, Abraham believed what God said. What did God say? You're going to have a baby. You're going to have a child. "Abraham believed God and was counted unto him for righteousness." When God spoke, Abraham believed. Jesus is saying, "I speak, and I speak the words of God. You

don't believe. You're not like Abraham. You don't welcome the messenger that comes from heaven, and you don't believe when God speaks. You are not Abraham's spiritual children." It comes down to that.

So, He says, if you're Abraham's children, then do what Abraham did. "But," verse 40, "you're seeking to kill me, a man who told you the truth, which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did." When a messenger from heaven came and spoke the word of God, Abraham listened, believed. You're not children of Abraham, spiritually.

What does it mean to be a spiritual child of Abraham? Well, Galatians 3 gives us insight. "Even so Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him as righteousness." That's quoted from Genesis 15:6. "Therefore be sure that it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham." Who are the spiritual sons of Abraham? People who believed God, who believed God's Word. You don't believe My word. You don't treat Me the way Abraham treated Me when I appeared at his house.

So, verse 39, they answered and said, "Abraham is our father." They're very insistent about this. How can it be? How can it be when you're trying to kill Me, and I'm the one who told you the truth from God? Abraham would never do that. Verse 41, He turns the corner and He says, "You're doing the deeds of your father, and your father is not Abraham, and your father is not God." Their response is very interesting. They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication." And here's where they make the final claim: "We have one Father: God." Not only are we the physical children of Abraham, the spiritual children of Abraham, but we are the spiritual children of God. Why? Because we're not born of fornication.

There's a lot of possibilities for that. Let me give you just the simple straightforward thing that they're saying: we're not pagans. We're not pagan. We're not idolaters. Connected with every form of idolatry in the ancient world was fornication. Sexual perversion, sexual sin, prostitution. You just read it; it's everywhere in paganism. Everywhere. Remember, there's only one true religion in the world, and the Old Testament, that's true, Judaism, only one true religion in the world. In the New Testament, that's Christianity. Everything else is paganism, everything. And connected with paganism was immorality. That was part of how you worshipped the deities, by engaging with temple prostitutes, et cetera, et cetera. So when they're saying, "Look, we aren't idol worshippers. We're not involved in the immorality of paganism. We're monotheists. We worship God. God is our Father."

And you know what? They had a point. Because to this day, in Israel, there are no idols. There were no idols then. They got cleaned out of their idols by the judgment of God that came on the northern kingdom. Obliterated it. On the southern kingdom, in the Babylonian captivity, when they came back from the Babylonia captivity, 586 BC, they never introduced idols again. Well, that doesn't mean they worshipped the true God in the true way. They worshipped the name of the true God in an utterly unacceptable way. But, they're right. We're not engaged in fornication. We don't have temple

prostitutes. We're not into paganism. How can You say Abraham is not our father when we acknowledge that God is our Father, and He was Abraham's Father?

So, first, we're physical children of Abraham, and that'll keep us out of hell forever. Then, we're spiritual children of Abraham because we believe what Abraham believed. And Jesus says, "No you don't. You don't believe when God speaks because I've been speaking the Word of God to you, and you haven't done what Abraham did, and that is embrace the messenger who comes from heaven into your midst." And He sums it up in verse 42 by saying, "If God were your Father, you would," what? You'd love Me. You'd welcome Me. You'd embrace Me.

How do you know when God is somebody's Father? How do you know that? They have an eagerness to hear His Word and embrace His Son. Okay? That's how you know. The problem with them, go back to verse 37 for a moment. He says, first of all, "My word has no place in you." I just want to look at that: has no place. That's *chre* in Greek. Not that the pronunciation is important, but just a very interesting word that means "to move." It could be "to leave." It could be "to depart." It could mean "to advance, to make progress." I would put it this way in the vernacular: My word goes no place with you. Makes no progress. My word does not advance with you. That's what He is saying. My word stops. It goes nowhere with you. You can't possibly have the same father as Abraham, who believed God's word to such a complete degree that it was counted to him as righteousness, imputed righteousness to Abraham because he believed the word of God. Furthermore, God is not your Father, because unlike Abraham, you want to kill the messenger from heaven. You don't love Me. "If God were your Father," verse 42, "you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God. And I haven't come on My own initiative; He sent Me."

This is a complete shattering of all their confidence in their religion, and it's a necessary one, to be sure. Because as long as they trust in their false hopes, they're doomed and damned. You have two problems going here: you don't receive the word of God, and you hate the Son of God. You do not belong to God. They are very insistent, however, that Abraham is their father, and God is their Father, and it comes down to loving the truth, and loving Jesus.

Can I just lay that in your mind somewhere so that you can make evaluations of people? How do you know when someone's a child of God? How do you know when you've met someone for whom God is Father? They love the truth; they love the Savior. Why are you here today? Why are you here to listen to me stand here and talk for an hour? You probably would not walk across a street to have somebody talk about any other subject for an hour to you unless it was required listening, unless there was some personal fascination. But in a diversity like this, why are all of you, with all of your different interests, all your different hobbies and jobs; why are you all listening? Why are you here? Why do you do this? Because you want to hear from God, and you believe what He says, and because you love His Son, right? And that's why you're here. The reason the people all going up and down Roscoe Boulevard aren't here is because that's not true of them. But if you go out and ask

them, "By the way, do you think you're a child of God?" "Of course I'm a child of God." But you're not a child of God.

You can always tell the children of God. They hear the truth, they believe the truth, and they love the Son. They embrace the Son. The other side of that is 1 Corinthians 16:22 where Paul said, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be damned." It's pretty serious. Abraham received the word of God and believed it. Abraham received the incarnation of God in an earthly form, visible, and received Him.

Insisting that you're a child of God doesn't work because the truth is: you're not. You have another father. Verse 43, Jesus poses a question: "Why do you not understand what I'm saying?" This is so important. "Because you can't hear My word." What has prevented you from hearing? The natural man understandeth not the things of God because to him they are what? They are foolishness. So, unbelief leads to ignorance. Unbelief leads to ignorance. You don't understand because you won't believe. Once you believe, then everything gets clear, right? So, you don't understand what I'm saying because you can't hear My words. You don't have a capacity. This is the sinner's problem. He is unable, unwilling, incapacitated by his unbelief. They thing they have one father. They're not idolaters. They have one God. They're monotheists. But it's not true. Verse 44, He drops the bomb. "You are of your father the devil." I wish there had been a little more revelation at that point about their reaction. I can't comprehend what it would've been. You're of your father the devil. Dynamite. Unbelievable.

Religious people, in Matthew 13:38, are described as tares. And you remember what it says in 13:38? The wheat and the tare grow together in the church age, and even in the Christianity in the broad sense. It says there that the tares are sons of the evil one. That would be religious people inside the church, sons of the evil one. First John 3, 1 to 10, contrasts the children of God, the children of the devil, by the things they do. Only two fathers. You're of your father the devil, so you want to do the desires of your father. Again, we're back to this very, very common metaphor in the Hebrew language and culture that when you said something was the son of something, it meant they had shared attitudes, shared dispositions, shared desires, shared characteristics. So, your father is the devil, so you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, he doesn't stand in the truth because there's no truth in him, whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature. He's a liar and the father of lies. Satan is a murderer and a liar. You're not very far into the Bible before you find that out, right? He shows up in the garden, and what's the first thing he does? Lie. He lies. And the second thing he does is kill, and I'm not talking about Cain. I'm talking about the whole human race. How extensive is the murderous power of Satan? Hebrews says he has the power of death, and he exercised it in one act that literally killed the human race in the garden. We're all born corrupt.

Interesting book I'm reading called "The Emperor of All Maladies." It's an incredible book on the history of cancer, and it reads like a biography. What this scientist, medical doctor, brilliant and very well-written, what he concludes in the end after hundreds and hundreds of pages, the bottom line is: you can't cure cancer because cancer is just being human. There's something in us, he says, that's corrupting us. It's not a virus. It's not some germ. It's not a bacteria. It doesn't happen accidentally. It's not some kind of a congenital defect. It's just there in us. This is a secular book, but there's something in us that's just corrupting us, and we can't sustain the perfection of that original body. It goes bad. Well, it goes bad because there was a murderer in the garden, and he killed us all. And he's a liar, and his lies still go on today. And one of his big lies is that everybody's a child of God.

So, "You're of your father the devil," verse 45, Jesus said. "So when I speak the truth, you don't believe Me." There it comes. You don't believe the truth. You could simplify it and say, here's the way to diagnose a child of the devil: doesn't believe the truth, doesn't love Christ. Here's a way to diagnose a child of God: loves the truth, loves Christ. Right? And this is really inexcusable. Verse 46, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" He's saying, is there something I've done that makes you not believe Me? Do you know something about Me? Is there some corruption in Me? Do you know? Are there any who would stand up and give testimony that I'm anything other than holy? Do you know something about Me that calls my credibility into question? That mitigates against My integrity? Well, nobody did, or they would've thrown them at Him. And when it came down to trying to get a reason to execute Him in the end, they had all those mock trials and nobody could come up with anything. Finally, they had to bribe some false witnesses to make up things. Why don't you believe Me? Have I ever spoken an untruth? Has there ever been a word uttered by My mouth or an act done by Me that's anything less than righteous and holy? Which of you convicts Me of sin? There was no record of any misdoing on the part of Jesus, ever. And believe me, they looked for it.

So, if I just speak the truth from the vantage point of personal integrity, why don't you believe it? The answer is: you don't believe it because you are of your father the devil. That is the dire reality of human condition. We read it in Titus, didn't we? You want to be kind and patient with unbelieving people because you used to be one until the kindness of God appeared to you, and mercy was shown, and you were regenerated. You lie, and you kill, and you hate, and you deceive because that's your family. That's who you are. Verse 47, He says, "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you don't hear them, 'cause you're not of God." Everybody you meet is either of God or of the devil. Everybody in your world, my world, everybody in the world. And there's no sense in letting people think it's anything different, right? That's not helpful. That's not helpful at all. And the world of Satan, the kingdom of darkness, as Paul calls it, is caught up in hatred, which is simply a manifestation of selfishness; and deception, lies, untruth.

This is universal. This isn't just Jewish people. It's everybody. First John 3, verse 8, "The one who practices sin is of the devil, for the devil sinned from the beginning." No one who is born of God goes on continually practicing sin because His seed abides in him. He can't sin. He's born of God. The

children of the devil have an unbroken pattern of sin, shows itself in pride, which manifests itself in hatred and murder. Children of God practiced righteousness. It shows itself in the love of the truth, in the love of the Savior, in the love of one another. So, when you think about checking into your ancestry, this is where you want to look. I'm glad, if you had somebody in the back who made an impact on society, that's fun to know, and exciting to talk about. But that's not what matters. What matters is not the family in the past, but the family in the present. What family are you in? That's the ultimate spiritual question. Let's bow in prayer.

The Word is so powerful again, Lord. We feel it. Its energy, its truthfulness, its impact. We know we're holding in our hands something that is alive, powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. Piercing the heart, dividing asunder soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We thank You that every part of it informs us of truth. The true human condition has been the theme of this text, but it's equally important to know that we have in the Scriptures the answer to the true human condition, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." As many as have received Him, to them He gave the right to be called the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name. We know that we go from being sons of the devil to sons of God by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, but that can't happen unless You do a work in the heart, unless there is the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. So we ask, O God, that You would be merciful and gracious, and that You would call sinners even now to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if they're struggling with faith, may they like the men in the Bible say, "Lord, I believe help my unbelief. Fill up the weakness of my faith. Help me to put trust in the Son of God, that I might not perish as a child of the devil, and everlastingly bound in the sorrows of the kingdom darkness; but that I might leave this world as a child of God, not Satan, to enter the eternal bliss of heaven." That's our prayer.

Father, do that work, we pray in hearts. And we ask, Lord, that You would use us, give us maybe just a different look at the world as we carry these thoughts out, and help us to understand the urgency of life, and death, and the reality of it. May we be faithful to proclaim Your truth, we pray. Amen.

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