

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Priority of Behavior Over Blood (John. 8:37-47)

John chapter eight is packed with action. The action documented had a violent conclusion. The last verse in the chapter says, "Then they took up stones to throw at Him..." What happened? What was said that prompted wicked men to such violence?

The Jews who opposed Jesus suffered with a carnal predisposition to justify themselves by claims of their blood connection with Abraham. When, for example, the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John's baptism, John called for them to repent, warning them not to rely on their bloodline (Matt. 3:9). Paul gave instruction directed to this fleshly propensity when he wrote: "...he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God," (Rom. 2:28,29; see also Phil. 3:1-11).

This was a massive stumbling block for many Jews, justifying themselves, excusing themselves and denying the need to be saved, based on claims of

kinship with Abraham.

The issue was (as expressed by Jesus), their attitude and behavior was obviously unlike the character of their claimed father, Abraham.

Jesus said to them: "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you." (John 8:37). They were descendants of Abraham by blood, but not by behavior! Jesus spoke divine truth to these fleshly descendants of Abraham, and gave evidence of His deity and integrity. Yet, they believed Him not and their answer was: "Abraham is our father," (John 8:39).

Jesus said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham," (John 8:39). They were Abraham's children by blood, but not behavior. This tells us a very simple thing: Blood is never an excuse for misbehavior. Unbelief and sin cannot be defended by claims of blood, genealogy or family origin. If a paraphrase be permitted, Jesus is saying: I know who you are; I want to talk about what you are doing, your behavior. You are seeking to kill me, because My Word has no place in you!

"But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this!" These Jews were plotting the downfall and death of mankind's greatest Benefactor. The Messiah who came to save them, was now in sights of their malicious intent. They had the blood of Abraham, but not his heart.

The privilege of good heritage can be repudiated and lost by our ill-advised moral choices. It doesn't matter how good the people were we came from, if we fail to respond to God's Word and pursue godly character! Who we are is known by what we do, not the genealogy we claim! The good work of God's Word, the influence of Abraham and the person and work of Christ was all obstructed and resisted by the carnal, party spirit and sinful willfulness of these men who sought to kill Christ. Their choices predominated over their heritage.

Next, Jesus said to them: You are doing the deeds of your father, but your father (as evidenced by behavior) is not Abraham; he is the devil!

They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father."

Then 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 came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."
(John 8:39-47)

What an act of courage, for Jesus to speak to his enemies with such boldness. He told them they were corrupt, because though their blood was Abraham's, their character was the devil's!

Our conduct says more about who we are related to than our blood! The genuine test is - what do we think and do. Paternity is shown by practice. And "He who is of God hears God's words!"

- Warren E. Berkley

"Father, glorify Your name."

(John 12:28a)

In this short and simple prayer, Jesus Christ asks His Father to glorify Himself. There is no way to escape the implication that His sovereign power is fully capable of granting this request. In view of the surrounding statements of Jesus, there seems to be no doubt that the means of such exalted glory is the cross. "And Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'" (John 12:23-24). "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die." (John 12:32-33).

In the cross the superior glory, the radiant splendor of the Majesty on High is demonstrated. We were enemies of God, but through the cross "...we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Rom. 5:10). As Paul declared, "For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach -- if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." (Col. 1:19-23). Men can stand before the great God of heaven as "holy and blameless and beyond reproach" because of what

Christ accomplished by His death on the cross! How wonderfully the cross directs men to ascribe honor to Him, to magnify, extol and praise His holy name! How supremely the name of the heavenly Father was glorified! To God be the glory, indeed!

In response to this prayer of Christ, "Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'" John did not specify how God had glorified it, but the baptism of Christ at the hands of John, or the transfiguration would come to mind. Peter wrote of Christ receiving glory from the Father when he said, "we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'-- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." (2 Pet. 1:16b-18). When God said, "I...will glorify it again," there is no doubt of that reference to the cross. Of His impending crucifixion, Jesus said, "But for this purpose I came to this hour." (John 12:27b). Again, Jesus prayed to His Father, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You," (John 17:1b).

Through Christ, God is glorified - all the goodness of God is brought to light and made manifest. Paul said that our Savior, Jesus Christ, "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). Friend, do you have the life that comes through the gospel? Here in this context Jesus said, "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." (John 12:25-26). Friend, are you

serving Christ today? You can glorify God by obeying His will for your life as taught in the gospel. Can we help you?

- GFS

> A weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.

> Don't grumble if you don't have what you want: be thankful you don't get what you deserve.

> The world will not persecute a worldly Christian.

> If it really doesn't matter how you live as a Christian, then why is it that most of the New Testament was written to Christians to show them how to live?

> The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.

> "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Lessons From the Twelve Spies!"* (text: Num. 13:26-14:12); Sunday evening: *Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – Love in the Midst of Treachery!* (Mark 14:1-11).

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting is scheduled for Sept. 18-23, with Eric Reynolds.