

IT MATTERS WHO WE'RE FOLLOWING

John 8:45-59 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

As we come to this final section of Jesus' long message in John 8, we need to actually try to put ourselves in the crowd of Pharisees and Jews He was speaking to. There is a drama being played out here that is amazing. This drama is not only in the words Jesus spoke, but in the dramatic pauses. Jesus made quite a statement in John 8:45. He said, "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me." Then to follow up this claim, Jesus asked them all a question in verse 46. "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?"

This question put in another way is, "Is there even one of you here who can rightly accuse Me of any sin? Is there anyone here who can point the finger at Me for any evil in My life? We don't read about the silence, but you can feel it as you read this text. There is a long pause here. The eyes of Jesus must have encompassed every soul in that crowd saying, "Tell Me about My sin." No one accepted this extraordinary challenge Jesus gave them. No one! No one put forth a charge against Jesus. The idea is that the silence was saying, "You all admit you can make no charge against Me. Then why don't you accept what I say. Why do you not believe Me? Again, I hear and feel the silence of the crowd. It must have been an uncomfortable silence. Then Jesus again broke the silence saying, "Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." In other words, Jesus was saying, "I know why you do not accept My words. It is because you are not from God, and there is nothing of the Spirit of God in your hearts." So, what was Jesus getting at by saying they were not from God?

Think of it this way. No experience can enter into a man or woman's heart or mind unless there is something inside us there to answer to it. A person who is tone deaf can never experience the thrill of hearing and appreciating music. A person who is color blind cannot appreciate the glory of a painting or a picture with all God's colors. A person with no sense of time or rhythm cannot appreciate the beauty of ballet or dancing. The way the Jews thought about the Spirit of God was that the Spirit reveals truth to God's people, and the Spirit enables people to recognize and grasp the truth they hear or see. Another way of saying this is that if a person shuts the door of their heart against the Spirit of God, then they can never recognize God's truth when they see it. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:14, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

It was as if Jesus was saying to them, "You have gone your own way. You have followed your own ideas. You have manufactured a god of your own making. The Holy Spirit of God has been unable to gain an entry into your hearts. That is why you will not accept My words. You are strangers to God." This cut them to the quick. It really matters who we are following. The choices we have are very limited. Either we are duped by the devil, or we are following Jesus. Believers may get off track on minor points of doctrine, but true believers agree on essentials, that Jesus alone can save, as sinners by faith trust in Jesus alone for salvation.

As Jesus completed His words to the crowd in the temple treasury, what stands out as the theme of His words is our title today, “It matters who we are following.” It is a simple outline I bring to you. Jesus told the crowd and us today who the two leaders are, the devil, Satan, or Jesus. It matters who we are following. The choice is between God the Son and the father of lies, Satan. Jesus gave the crowd six reasons why it matters if we follow Satan and seven reasons it matters if we follow Jesus. As we jump into this incredible contrast, please take notes, and learn today why it really matters whom you are following:

THOSE FOLLING THE FATHER OF LIES, SATAN, ARE LIKE THIS, (1.)

Let’s look at the six results or characteristics of those who follow Satan. Jesus said in John 8:44, “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 has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character (his own native tongue) for he is a liar and the father of lies. **(1) They deny the truth because it is the truth.** Jesus said in v. 45, “But because I tell the truth, you do not believe. Spiritual truth always demands faith. This is the law of our moral nature. Satan knows this so he is constantly seeking to blind us to the truth. This is what we have been learning and studying in our last studies in our small groups. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “And without faith, it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.” To hear the truth and to deny it is the truth, and then to reject it is devilish. That is what these Pharisees did. They were following their father, the devil, and bent on doing the lusts of Satan, trampling the truth of Jesus under their feet. Those who follow Satan develop an affinity for lying and lies. They believe only liars. If you are opposing what I am preaching this morning, as I am preaching the Word, who are you following? It really matters whom you are following.

(2) They fail to hear God’s Word and want no part of His Word. Jesus said in verse 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.” Jesus was following a simple form of logic. In logic, how Jesus spoke here would be called “a negative syllogism.” Major premise: “He who is of God hears God’s words.” Minor premise: “You do not hear God’s words.” The conclusion paints the picture of the deadly grip of Satan in its haunting truth for unbelievers. “Therefore, you are not of God.” It really matters if you are following Satan. If so, you cannot hear God’s words.” It is impossible. **(3) They accuse Jesus falsely in an effort to cover up their own sin.** The Pharisees said in v. 48, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon.” Jesus’ words brought the Pharisees to a boiling point as they became vicious in their accusations, which were their open confession that they were at war with truth. Saying, “you are a Samaritan and have a demon,” was about as mean as they could get. Using the word Samaritan was their saying Jesus was illegitimate in His birth and in His faith. In Aramaic, the word for Samaritan Shomerono, which is the Aramaic word for prince of the devils, who is Satan. It appears this is more than a name of the Samaritans the Jews hated, but they were saying, “You are a child of the devil, have a devil, and you are empowered by the

evil one himself. Satan is never original, for all the Pharisees did was to say in essence, “You called us sons of the devil. It takes one to know one. You are a Samaritan and You have a demon. The very name, Satan means the accuser, hater, or adversary of the brethren/believers. For those following Satan, accusing the Lord is standard procedure, If you wonder at work why so many people cast doubts on the Bible and Christ, remember that is how Satan has worked from the beginning, even when he seduced Adam and Eve, saying, “Has God said?” Those who will not follow Christ will continue to use Satan’s methods. Who are you following? It really makes a difference who you are following.

(4) They misquote God’s Word in order to discredit Jesus. Notice verse 52, “The Jews said to Him, “Now we know you that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet You say, “If anyone keeps My Word, He will never taste death.” Jesus promised in verse 51, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never **see** death.” The Greek word Jesus used for **see** was **theoreo**. It means to fully examine all the details—including seeing death as separation from the Father at death. The Pharisees purposely misquoted Jesus using a different word--**taste**—**geuo**. The word they used means to partake of all of something, to eat it all, or to experience it all. Jesus was never telling us that we could avoid dying and experiencing death, for it is appointed for all of us to die. What Jesus promised is that we don’t have to fully examine all the eternal details of death and its separation from the Father, because Jesus took that in our place at Calvary.

(5) They ridicule the Savior and reject His claims. Look at the Pharisees’ two words of ridicule and rejection in verses 53/57. Verse 53, “Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do You make Yourself out to be? Verse 57, “You are not fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Isn’t death the end of every great man of God? Yes, except for Enoch and Elijah! So the logic of the Pharisees seems flawless, but it doesn’t apply because they misquoted Jesus. Then they said to Jesus, “You aren’t even 50 years old, and have you seen Abraham? What’s wrong with their thinking? They have rejected Jesus claims to be the Son of God, God the Son, Messiah. The Pharisees were on the wrong road. They were as off as a driver trying to go to Vernal by way of Farson, Boulder, Pinedale, Bondurant, Jackson, Moose Junction, and Yellowstone. The farther they went, the farther they got from the One who is the only Way, Truth, and Life.

(6) They oppose Jesus violently when faced with His deity. Notice verse 59. The tension between falsehood and truth finally can reach a breaking point, and so it did here. Falsehood always seeks to kill truth when it knows it is defeated. Without due process of law or trial is a true court of law, the Jews now sought to kill the only One who desired to save them. It was not yet Jesus’ appointed hour to sacrifice His life for us, so He made Himself scarce and hid Himself before going out of the temple. Who are you following today? You don’t have to follow Satan.

THOSE FOLLOWING JESUS, WHO IS THE TRUTH, ARE LIKE THIS.

(II.) Let’s look finally at the seven results or characteristics of those who follow Christ. What are the seven reasons why it matters if we follow Jesus.

(1) We follow the One who alone is sinless. Notice v. 46. Jesus said, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? What a claim Jesus made? “Which of you can convict Me of sin?” Talk about a dead silence—what a dramatic moment! Jesus was saying to them, in essence, “If you admit you can find no sin in Me, then why do not receive Me, and accept what I say?” Then more silence, until in v. 47, Jesus said, “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” It makes all the difference who you are following. Do you follow the sinless One?

(2) We follow the One who possesses no demon for He honors His Father. Notice verse 49. “Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.” There is no demon who honors God the Father. Jesus was greatly honoring the Father when He proved that Satan was the father of these Jews. What a reply it was as Jesus contrasted what He was doing and what they were doing—dishonoring Him.

(3) We follow the One who seeks the glory of His Father. Notice verses 50, 54. Jesus is the second person of the Triune God, and He shares the glory of God. We read, “Yet I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks it, and He is the Judge...Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. It is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, “He is our God.” Both the Father and the Holy Spirit glorify Jesus, but as Jesus was on earth before the cross, He sought His Father’s glory.

(4) We follow the One who will not let us see eternal death. Notice verse 51. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, “If anyone keeps My word, he will never see death.” Remember—we will never know separation from the Father in death.

(5) We follow the One who cannot and will not lie. Notice verse 55. “Jesus said, “But your have not known Him. I know Him. If I were to say that I do not know Him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and I keep His word.” Jesus, the eternal truth this day, called the Pharisees liars and told them that who their daddy was, their father He said was the devil. Oh what a leader we follow! Thomas said to Jesus in John 14:5-6, “Lord, we don’t know where You are going and how can we know the way, Jesus said, “I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but my Me. It is impossible for Jesus to lie.

(6) We follow the One who knows God’s Word and keeps God’s Word. Notice verse 55. Jesus said of His Father, “But I do know Him, and I keep His Word.” In the fullest sense of knowing, even more closely than a husband knows his own wife, Jesus knows the Father and He keeps and guards His Word. Is this Jesus your leader whom you are following? It really matters whom you are following.

(7) We follow the One who is the eternal God, the great I Am who knew Abraham. Notice verses 56-58. Jesus said, “You father Abraham rejoiced that He would see My day. He saw it and was glad. So, the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM!!!! Jesus was the object of Abraham’s highest hopes. Abraham, old and wrinkled at age 100, by God’s divine promise fathered a son by his 90-year-old wife, Sarah. The son’s name was Isaac, and God promised Abraham that through this son, all the earth would be blessed as through Isaac, Jesus would come, our Redeemer. Jesus said it, “I am God, timeless. I have always been, I am now, and I always will be. Our leader is the Eternal God. PTL!!!