

“YOU ARE OF YOUR FATHER THE DEVIL” – A Study of John 8:44

This bombshell statement is taken from a quote by Jesus Christ, recorded for us in John 8:44. In the larger context of John chapter eight, we find Him teaching in the Temple and having to deal with the issue of the adulterous woman brought to Him by the scribes and the Pharisees (8:1-11). The chapter ends with the Jews seeking to stone Christ for His claim to deity (8:56-59). But in between those very dramatic events, our Lord continues to instruct the crowd which had gathered there; emphasizing the importance of knowing God’s truth (8:24-40). He is so persuasive that many believe in Him (8:30). However, some Pharisees continue to be a part of the crowd, as His antagonists, for the purpose of undermining Him and His teaching (8:13 ff).

In the midst of it all, our Savior issues the indictment of v44, against some who are part of that dialogue. In light of the mutual animosity which existed between Jesus and these Jewish leaders, we can assume that the accusation was directed primarily at them. Yet the Pharisees were highly respected in Israelite society, both religiously and politically. At the same time, we should not be surprised that Christ, in His omniscience, was able to see through their hypocritical facade and call it for what it was, in denouncing their professed relationship with God (8:38-42, 47).

What can we learn from this drama recorded for us by the apostle John? On a macro level, the contrast between truth and falsehood is undeniable; with an emphasis upon truth and its ability to set one free (vv32-34). Jesus then goes on to distinguish between the ultimate source of truth in v40, and the original author of falsehood in v44. On a spiritual level, He makes it clear that there are two “fatherhoods.” If God is not your father, then the devil will occupy that space in your life. Notice how He hints at that in v38, as well as in v41, before dropping the bombshell in v44. On a practical level, if the devil is your father, you will not be open to receiving God’s truth (v45; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Acts 16:14). In addition, the more an individual allows the evil one to influence their life, the more prone they will be toward believing and spreading falsehood. Simply put, you will be increasingly drawn to liars and will become one yourself (8:46-47).

Does this mean that an individual functioning under the fatherhood of God has an absolute and supernatural immunity from demonic deception? Not necessarily. On the one hand, the New Testament never indicates that a true believer can be demon-possessed. But if a Christian is not careful, he or she can come under Satan’s influence. Christ’s rebuke of Peter in Matthew 16:21-23, is re-affirmed by the apostles, with their warnings about this very real spiritual danger (2 Corinthians 2:10-11; 11:13-15; Ephesians 4:26-27; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:26; 1 Peter 5:8-9).

The contemporary application by means of a hypothetical example is clear and obvious. Let’s say, hypothetically, that there is a political leader who claims to be a born-again Christian; even though he has a proven reputation as a pathological liar. In other words, he lies through his teeth as easily as the rest of us breathe through our noses. Should we take him at his word for that profession of faith, or not? Should we believe the many Evangelical pronouncements declaring him to be “the chosen and anointed one of God” or not? In light of what Jesus said to the religious/political leaders of His day in John 8:44, should we consider the possibility that such a political leader is functioning under an altogether different kind of supernatural influence, or not? And, that what our Savior predicted in Matthew 24:24, is being fulfilled before our very eyes!

Sincerely in Christ,

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