

***“Proof of Sonship”***

May 11, 2014

Text: John 8:37-40

**There is a popular misconception among many people today called “the universal fatherhood of God.”**

This is the belief that God is the spiritual Father of all men. Although He is the Father of all mankind in the sense that He’s the Creator, of all men, He certainly is not every human being’s Father spiritually.

That becomes very clear in our text today, when Jesus says to some people looking at Him w/ angry eyes=> *“I speak the things which I have seen with **My Father**; therefore you also do the things which you heard from **your father**”*  
(Jn 8:38).

There are 2 fathers & 2 families of children w/i the human race. Jesus called 1 of those fathers, *“My Father,”* & the father of those who wouldn’t believe in Him, *“your father.”* The prayer X taught His disciples, *“Our Father, who is in heaven”* was never intended for that 2<sup>nd</sup> group. It makes no sense for nonbelievers to say that, because God is not their Father, in the most important sense.

We must be born again, before we can rightly be called children of God, or call God our spiritual Father.

The Bible makes this very clear, saying=> *“As many as **received Him** [X], to them He gave the **right** to become **children of God**, even to those who **believe** in*

*His name” (Jn 1:12).*

God allows such believers to call themselves His children,  
out of His special/fatherly love for them.

The Apostle John wrote=> “*See how great a love the  
Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called  
children of God” (I Jn 3:1).*

John also wrote to Xns=> “*We know that we are of God, and that  
the whole world lies in the power of the evil one”*  
(I Jn 5:19).

**But how do we know whether we personally are children of  
God, or children of the devil?**

That is the question Jesus will answer in today’s text saying=>

**The proof of our sonship (whether it be sons of God or Satan)  
is found in 3 kinds of behavior/response to 3 issues=>**

- \* our response to the truth
- \* to whom our hearts listen
- \* the character of our deeds

**\* How Do We Respond to the Truth?**

**Jesus has just told His Jewish listeners that, if they would  
continue in His word, they would know the truth, and  
the truth would set them free, spiritually.**

They responded indignantly by saying, “*We are Abraham's  
descendants & have never yet been enslaved to anyone”*  
(Jn 8:33).

As we begin today’s text, we hear Jesus’ answer=>

**[Jn 8:37] (Jesus)=> “I know that you are Abraham's  
descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has  
no place in you.”**

**Jesus acknowledged that these Jewish people were the physical descendants of Abraham.**

But He pointed out that this hadn't kept them from sinning the horrible sin of wanting to kill Him—the Son of God. I.e., they wanted to kill the very One Abraham had loved/worshiped/served.

In fact, their being descended from Abraham was actually more of a hindrance to them than a help.

It gave them false confidence that being Abraham's descendants guaranteed them acceptance w/ God, who had formed a covenant w/ Abraham centuries earlier.

Jesus was beginning to teach them that true sons/daughters of Abraham weren't simply people w/ a family connection to the old patriarch, but people who believed in God & therefore obeyed Him—just as Abraham had.

I.e., they have the same kind of a relationship w/ God as Abraham.

This is a truth the Apostle Paul would later state very clearly, writing=> “*Abraham **believed** God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. / Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of **faith** who are **sons of Abraham**” (Gal 3:6-7).*

A Jew's pedigree, connecting his family line back to Abraham, does not make him a true son of Abraham.

The faith in God's Son, which he shares in common with his forefather Abraham, does.

**Saving faith like Abraham's changes the heart's attitudes.**

1<sup>st</sup>, it causes a person to sincerely love the Lord.

In Abraham's case, it caused him to anticipate w/ joy the day of Messiah's coming.

Jesus will tell the Jews=> "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad*" (Jn 8:56).

2<sup>nd</sup>, saving faith like Abraham's reforms a person's

character/behavior, making him obedient to God.

And that, in turn, makes him increasingly righteous in his own personal life.

Not only was Abraham's faith reckoned to him as righteousness, it began a sanctifying process w/i him, by which he became more truly righteous in word/deed.

That was Abraham's response to the Truth, when God revealed it to him.

**By stark contrast, the Jews of Jerusalem, hearing Jesus teach them the truth of God, sought to kill Him.**

Jesus, being omniscient God, looked into their hearts & discovered there a murderous hatred for Him.

He publically exposed it, pointing out the terrible discrepancy between their attitude toward Him, & Abraham's attitude.

He was forcing them to recognize that not all of Abraham's physical descendants are also spiritual descendants.

**Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus? Jesus Himself said it was because the truth of His word had no place in their hearts.**

This was the most important difference, between them/Abraham. Abraham had believed/loved God, but they rejected both God & His Truth, by rejecting Jesus X His Son, who gave them that Truth.

Their relationship w/ Abraham, of which they were so proud, did them no good morally/spiritually, because they, unlike Abraham, had rejected the Truth of God, allowing it no place in their hearts.

**Someone: How can I avoid making the same mistake these Jewish people made, in my own attitude towards Jesus?**

Give His Word a place in your heart=>

1) An inside place—not just an outside place in your life/home, such as a shelf, a nightstand, or your library.

Instead, hide it away in your heart.

It's not enough to believe (even firmly) that the Bible is inspired and therefore true.

If we don't let it richly dwell w/i us by reading and meditating on it daily, it won't impact our lives as it could/should.

## 2) A place of honor

We should seek fresh instruction from the Bible each day so that its words permeate/preoccupy our minds, and provide comfort/enjoyment to our hearts.

If something else holds that place of honor in your heart, deliberately take it away, & put God's Word there.

## 3) A place of trust

Give the Word your full confidence, because it alone can teach you how to live a life pleasing to God, and then it will show you the way to heaven.

If you trust partly in God's Word & partly in man's words, you'll fall like a man w 1 foot on a rock & the other foot in knee-deep mud.

## 4) A place of authority

Make God's Word the master of your thoughts, by saturating your mind w/ its truth, and humbling yourself before it.

Let it also rule over your feelings, your will, your conscience, your words/deeds.

If it says Jesus commands something, do it;

If He forbids something, don't do it.

Surrender yourself to X by surrendering to His Word.

### 5) A place of love

David wrote, “*O how I love Your law!*” (Psa 119:97).

When you love the Word, it will delight your soul.

But you’ll never love it w/o filling your mind w/ it.

In all of this we see that our response to the truth is a proof of our being sons/daughters of God; proof of our sonship.

If we saturate our hearts w/ X’s Word, treasure/honor it, trust it, obey its authority, & love it, we have some good evidence that God (its Author) is truly our Father.

### \* To Whom Do Our Hearts Listen?

This is a 2<sup>nd</sup> proof of a Xn’s sonship, as a child of God.

Because the Word has found a place in the believer’s heart, & he has become a child of God, he listens-to/heeds his Heavenly Father’s voice.

He also listens for the voice of his Savior.

Jn 10 (Jesus)=> “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me*” (10:27).

A believer has become very different in that sense, from non-believers, who listen to their father—the devil.

He has become more like Jesus, who spoke the words of God, being of God, having been w/ God, & having heard/seen God.

[Verse 38] (Jesus)=> “*I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore [because I do so, in your hearing] you also do the things which you heard from your father.*”

I.e., in reaction against God's truth, which I give you.

**The word “*speak*” here has less to do w/ the content of what Jesus said, than the fact that He always expressed the thoughts/nature of God, to mankind; He is the Logos (the Word) of God—God expressing Himself to man.**

X was, by His very nature, the human expression on earth of what He had seen in heaven.

He was, you might say, a living projection of what He saw the Father doing in heaven.

In Jn 5, He said=> *“The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner”* (Jn 5:19).

There is no way for us, w/ our human limitations, to adequately or accurately describe how that actually worked in X's life.

But we see something similar in Moses' building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

During the 40 days he was on Mt. Sinai, he was taken into heaven, where he saw a heavenly Sanctuary.

Then he was told to go back to earth, & to build Israel's Tabernacle *“according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain”* (Heb 8:5).

As in this building of the Tabernacle, Jesus' life on earth was an imitation of what He saw in heaven.

**Our Lord's words gave evidence not only of what He'd seen in heaven, but also of His own divine parentage/Sonship.**

This set him apart from the antagonistic Jews to whom He was speaking.

The words He spoke were exactly what you would expect of Someone who had lived-in & belonged-to, heaven, because He understood God's essence, & had full access to His Heavenly Father's heart/mind.

The 1 exception to that, was His Self-imposed ignorance of the day He would return to earth, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

Jesus had seen God's glory & was the expression of that glory, the radiance of that glory.

He communicated heavenly realities He had always seen at His Father's side, & w/ which He was very familiar.

His words were the outflow of His direct contact with, and immediate knowledge of God—a vision of God, which none other has ever seen, or could ever see.

**So when Jesus' hostile Jewish listeners rejected His words, they were rejecting eye-witness accounts of divine truth; firsthand revelations of what the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity had witnessed w/i the eternal Godhead.**

These nonbelievers had blithely turned their backs on some of the most precious/priceless information that has ever been revealed or made available to man.

But even worse than that, they were actually listening to their own spiritual father (the devil), & obeying his inflammatory words, as he incited them to kill the Son of God.

They weren't sure yet who X meant by "*your father*" & they wouldn't be until verse 44, when He would tell them directly=> "*You are of your father the **devil**.*"

But just as Jesus' words/actions proved that His Father was God, theirs proved that their father was the devil.

In each case, their actions proved their spiritual parentage/nature/Sonship.

### **Proof of X's divine Sonship was clearly heard in His words.**

#### 1) They were words of love/affection.

He described what He had seen w/ His Father, who is love.

I Jn 4:16=> "*We have come to know & have believed the love which God has for us. God is love....*"

So it's no wonder that Mk 12 tells us the crowds enjoyed listening to Him (12:37)—they sensed His love, because He is God.

#### 2) Jesus' words were also words of justice/righteousness.

God is a just/righteous God, who hates sin, and will by no means clear the guilty (Num 14:18).

When Jesus said the wicked will “*go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*” (Mt 25:46), He was speaking out of the righteous justice of God’s own nature, being Himself the eternal Logos, who was w/ God & who was God, from eternity past.

3) His words were also words of truth.

He never said anything by mistake, exaggerated anything, or forgot to say anything that needed to be said.

He never lied, shaded the truth, or withheld anything for fear His listeners wouldn’t accept it.

He measured His words & spoke each 1 w/o sarcasm, hypocrisy, or equivocation.

He spoke the truth, all the truth the Father had determined man should know, & nothing but the truth.

There’s an old hymn we used to sing that said, “Christ, the blessed One, gives to all, Wonderful words of life; Sinner, list to the loving call, Wonderful words of life.”

The Jewish listeners in our text refused to listen to Jesus’ loving, just, truthful words, that came right down from heaven.

If they had, it could have saved their souls, & given them eternal life.

I hope none of us here will be so foolish as to turn a deaf ear to the wonderful/gracious words of life—words of God—spoken by Jesus.

**I hope too, that if you are a believer, & therefore a partaker  
of God's own nature, your words also will give evidence  
of your parentage, as a child of God.**

It's not always easy to discern a parent's likeness in his/her child,  
while the child is young.

That usually becomes clearer when we become full grown.  
In regeneration too, God's nature is imparted to the believer—  
who is a new creature in X, remade in His likeness by the  
power of the Spirit, w/ God's own character/disposition.  
But that character/disposition is often better detected in the  
believer's mature years, than in his spiritual infancy.

Not only is the Father's character replicated in His child's new  
nature, it is also encouraged by nurture, as he fellowships  
w/ His Savior.

*"Our fellowship is with the Father, & with His Son Jesus  
Christ,"* said John (I Jn 1:3).

You can't fellowship w/ 2 such divine/powerful

Personalities as the-Father/the-Son, and not fall under  
their influence.

And this fellowship is such a close union, Jesus described it  
as our abiding in Him, & He in us (Jn 15:4).

As Chas. Spurgeon once put it=> "No child of God can live with God and  
contemplate the Person and Character of Christ so as to abide in Him  
without becoming changed into His image, *'from glory to glory, even as  
the Spirit of the Lord.'*"

**In the same way, the devil's children take on his character and characteristics as well, doing the things they've heard from him.**

Their spiritual father is the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10), so it's natural for them to speak spitefully about Xn people. Satan hates Jesus, so his people hate Jesus' people, and their hatred for us is just as lethal/murderous as it was for our Master.

They said of Paul, "*Away w/ such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!*" (Acts 22:22).

Like the devil (their father & "*the father of lies*"—Jn 8:44)

Satan's children also find it easy/natural for them to lie.

If you find yourself constantly getting caught up in lies, ask yourself whether your spiritual father is the Father of Truth, or that father of all lies, the devil.

\* **What Is the Character of Our Deeds?** (3<sup>rd</sup> proof of sonship)

[Verse 39]=> "*They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.'*"

**The Jews to whom Jesus was speaking were prob. irked by His statement about "*your father.*"**

They weren't sure what it meant, but they knew it wasn't positive and wasn't a compliment;

That it was intended to distinguish His Father from theirs, & implying that His was somehow better than theirs.

So they insisted that their father, both physically/spiritually, was Abraham—i.e., that Jesus was wrong, that they were committed to the same principles he'd been committed to; And that they were also like Abraham spiritually, just as a child's physical features resemble those of his parent.

[Verses 39b-40]=> *“Jesus said to them, ‘If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. / But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.’”*

**Jesus refuted their claim to be like Abraham spiritually, showing that the moral character of their deeds was the very opposite of the kind of deeds Abraham had done.**

Abraham had obeyed God's voice, and His commands.

God Himself had said of him (Gen 26:5)=>

*“Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.”*

Because of his relationship w/ God, based on his faith in

Him, Abraham was even called the *“friend of God”* (Jms 2:23).

What Jesus was telling His Jewish listeners was that, if they were truly the children of Abraham spiritually, they would do the same kinds of deeds he had done.

1) In Gen 18, he had welcomed 3 strangers, 1 of whom had turned out to be God the Son, the preincarnate X (Gen 18:1-4).

Abraham's "children" wanted to kill X, and Jesus said w/ ironic understatement, "*This Abraham did not do.*"

2) Abraham had rejoiced gladly, to see X's day (Jn 8:56).

His "children" wanted to end X's days on earth, by taking His life.

3) Abraham welcomed the truth God revealed to him.

His "children" rejected it out of hand, and hated Jesus (who had graciously come to earth as a man like them) for bringing it to them from heaven.

4) Abraham had obeyed God, going forth "*as the Lord had spoken to him*" (Gen 12:4).

His descendants in Jesus' day, like those of almost every other era, had constantly disobeyed God.

Instead of continuity of character between Abraham and his descendants, there was only discontinuity.

This difference was caused by their opposite attitudes towards X.

Abraham had believed/obeyed/loved X as He appeared and spoke to him.

Abraham's descendants disbelieved/disobeyed/hated X.

The Jews tragically misunderstood what it was to be a true child of Abraham from God's p.o.v.

The Apostle Paul would explain it this way=> "*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 which is of the heart, by the Spirit” (Rom 2:28-29).*

A transformative/miraculous operation on the heart, performed by the H.S., is required to make anyone a true son/daughter of Abraham, & a true child of God.

As a result, sin no longer dominates his heart, so his life begins to reflect his Heavenly Father’s life/nature/character.

As John says in I Jn 3:9=> *“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

### **What can we take from this passage, & apply to ourselves?**

1<sup>st</sup>, if we are truly children of God, & thus partakers of the divine nature, we too, like X, should imitate our Heavenly Father.

Eph 5:1=> *“Be **imitators** of God, as beloved **children**.”*

It’s natural for children to imitate their parents.

They can’t help it, which is why children grow up speaking their parents’ language w/ their parents’ accent, not a foreign language.

Our sonship as children of God is proven by our imitating His deeds of kindness/righteousness/holiness.

2<sup>nd</sup>, if we are truly children of God, we, like Jesus, will speak the things we have seen of our Father’s working in our lives.

Having learned of our Father’s love for us, something w/i us makes us want to tell others about it.

The more we learn about Jesus our Savior/Shepherd, the more we want our friends to know about Him, as we do.

3<sup>rd</sup>, if we are like those Jews in our text, who had no place in their hearts for Jesus' word, we can become just like them.

Refusing to open up our hearts to X the way Abraham did, we too can become skeptics, then infidels, then agnostics, & finally hardened/inveterate sinners.

As we listen to Satan & do his deeds ever more readily, it becomes clearer/clearer that he is our spiritual father.

Don't let this day pass w/o making sure there is proof in your life that you are a child of God, because you've believed in Jesus, giving Him His rightful place in your heart.

## ***“Proof of Sonship”***

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Text: John 8:37-40

1. Although God is the Father of all mankind in the sense that He is the Creator, He certainly is [8 not] every human being’s Father spiritually.
2. We must be born again before we can rightly be called [18 children] of God.

Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 3:1; 5:19

### **How do we know whether we are children of God, or children of the devil?**

#### **\* How Do We Respond to the Truth?**

Jn 8:33

#### **[Jn 8:37]**

3. Jesus acknowledged that these Jewish people were the physical descendants of Abraham; but this hadn’t kept them from wanting to [10 kill] Him—the Son of God.

Gal 3:6-7; Jn 8:56

4. Why did the Jews want to kill Jesus? Because the truth of His word had no [12 place] in their hearts.

Give His Word a place in your heart...

- \* an inside place
- \* a place of honor
- \* a place of trust
- \* a place of authority
- \* a place of love

Psa 119:97

5. Our response to the truth is a [12 proof] of our being sons and daughters of God.

#### **\* To Whom Do Our Hearts Listen?**

**[Verse 38]**

6. Christ was, by His very nature, the human expression of what He had [10 seen] in heaven.

Jn 5:19; Heb 8:5

7. When Jesus' hostile Jewish listeners rejected His words, they were rejecting eye-witness accounts of divine truth, witnessed within the [16 eternal] Godhead.

Jn 8:44

**Proof of Christ's divine Sonship was clearly heard in His words...**

\* words of love and affection

Mt 12:37

\* words of justice and righteousness

Num 14:18; Mt 25:46

\* words of truth

9. If you are a believer, and therefore a partaker of God's own nature, your words will give evidence of your parentage as a [12 child] of God.

1 Jn 1:3; Jn 15:4

10. The devil's children take on his character as well, doing the things they have [12 heard] from him.

Rev 12:10; Acts 22:22; Jn 4:88

**\* What Is the Character of Our Deeds?**

**[Verse 39]**

**[Verses 39b-40]**

11. Jesus refuted their claim to be like Abraham spiritually; the moral character of their deeds was the very [18 opposite] of deeds Abraham had done.

Gen 26:5; Jms 2:23; Gen 18:1-4; Jn 8:56; Gen 12:4

12. This difference was caused by their opposite attitudes towards [14 Christ].

Rom 2:28-29; 1 Jn 3:9

**What can we take from this passage and apply to ourselves?**

\*13. If we are truly children of God, we too, like Christ, should [16 imitate] our Heavenly Father.

Eph 5:1

- \*14. If we are truly children of God, we, like Jesus, will speak the things we have seen of our [18 Father's] working in our lives.
- \*15. If we are like those who had no place in their hearts for Jesus' word, we can become just like them: skeptics, infidels, agnostics, and finally [18 hardened] sinners.