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Unity of Father and Son

John 10:30-42

Intro: In our last study, we saw how the opponents of Jesus surrounded Him in the temple courts and demanded that He speak candidly about Himself. The implication of their demand was that their unbelief in Jesus was the fault of His vague speech and enigmatic teaching. So, Jesus does speak plainly to them but not in the manner that they had hoped. First, He tells them that He has already spoken and acted plainly (25). Most of the things Jesus said about Himself and most of the miraculous signs He had performed up to this point had been done in public and in the presence of some representative of the religious leaders. If His works and teachings failed to convey the proper message to their minds then no amount of plain speaking from Jesus would have been any more convincing.

Some may say that the Lord's teachings were not always clear and that many people were often confused by them so these authorities had a point. Well, I would have to say that church history and the personal experience of many a Christian would disagree. John wrote this Gospel for one express purpose and he shares this with us in 20:30-31. John declares simply that, apart from any direct claim from Jesus' lips, the record of His earthly ministry should be enough to bring readers to believe on Him as "the Christ, the Son of God..." Today, 2000+ years later, we know this to be true. There have been countless millions of people who have come to faith in Jesus Christ simply by reading John's Gospel. So, if readers were expected to be brought to faith by the written record of His ministry, then surely all those who saw His works and heard His teaching should have been expected to recognize Him even more readily for who He was, but they didn't because the eyes of too many of them were blinded.

Jesus continues His plain speaking and tells them that they do not believe because they are not His sheep. He goes on to explain the identifying nature of His sheep and the blessings they receive from Him by being His sheep. He gives His sheep eternal life and eternal safety. One of the more precious things about the Christian faith is knowing that the security of our eternal life doesn't depend on our feeble hold on Jesus Christ but on His firm grip on us! But Jesus doesn't stop there. He makes one final statement

that's as clear as can be and it really sets His opponents off!

30-31- The religious leaders had demanded a plain statement from Jesus of His messiahship; it appears they got more than they bargained for. But, what do these words mean? To what was Jesus referring when He made this statement? Well, there are 2 answers to that question and both are of critical importance to Christian doctrine.

First, we should understand that at the very least, Jesus was claiming to be one with the Father in the matter of the Father's will. This can be seen from the immediate context. Jesus had just spoken of the believer's security, adding that both the will of the Father and of Himself was to that end. Believers will never perish, 1) because no one could snatch them out of His hand and, 2) because no one could snatch them out of the Father's hand. Paul refers to this eternal security in **Col 3:3** where he says of the believer, "your life is hidden with Christ in God." In case someone might mistakenly think that the will of the Father and Son in the matter of preserving believers might not be in perfect agreement, Jesus immediately states here that its exactly in this that they are united. Because of this unity we know that when we see Jesus working we see God working, and we know that God is like Jesus. The Son is so responsive to the Father that He is one in mind, one in purpose and one in action with the Father.

Second, we should understand that although this is primarily what Jesus is saying, it's not all that He's saying. His comment obviously means more than just a claim to unity of will and purpose because nothing less than a full claim to divinity by Jesus can explain the reaction of the religious authorities. They wanted to stone Him! Why? Because they recognized that His statement was not just a claim to be one with the Father in relation to His will but also to be one with Him in power (**28-29**)! To these Jews, this was the same thing as claiming to be fully divine. It's the same as saying the Son is one in substance with the Father and that they are equal in power and glory.

Clearly, **vs30** is an important statement regarding the deity of Jesus Christ and the nature of the Godhead and it serves to refute a couple of pernicious false doctrines that have been around for a while. One false doctrine asserts that Jesus and the Father are the same Person. This is the "Jesus Only" doctrine (Sabellianism) that teaches that the Father, Son and Spirit are just

3 different modes or aspects of God. Jesus' statement of "I and My Father" means that the Father and Son are not the same Person but separate and distinct divine personalities.

The are one means that the Father and the Son are equal in nature, in essence, in what they really are. This refutes the false teaching that Jesus is not God (Arianism). The one in Greek is in the neuter gender, not the masculine. This means they are one in essence not one in Person. Opponents of the deity of Christ claim that the oneness Jesus had with the Father was nothing more than a unity of purpose and mission – even as a husband and wife or father and son may have a unity of purpose and mission. Yet, this argument misses the most obvious point: that even true unity between a husband and wife or a father and son can exist because they are each equally and totally human. The Father and Son have this unique unity because they are both equally and totally God – Divine Being.

This is yet another statement from Jesus that puts Him squarely with God in essence rather than with humanity. This is exactly how the Jews took His statement. Their response was completely wrong but their understanding was right.

They'd demanded plain speech from Jesus and He had told them plainly but it seems the plainness was intolerable!

32-39- Of course, claiming to be God is not the same thing as proving it. The fact that it needed to be proved is seen in the reaction of His hearers – they rejected it out right and were ready to stone Him for just saying it! Where's the proof? Is there any evidence to support this claim? Jesus responds to their rejection with 3 lines of argument.

1st - He'd done nothing to warrant a stoning (**32**). Jesus had done some amazing things, which of them merited His death? All His works were good works because they were done by the Father's direction. But, they were also good not only because they were acts of obedience to the Father but because they were also acts of blessing to men. Was His claim backed up by His works? Of course! The sick were healed, the lame made to walk, the blind to see, the dead were raised, lepers were cured and the multitudes were taught (and even fed on occasion). His works bore witness to His divine mission. His words were in perfect harmony with His works.

Oddly enough, His opponents reacted to this argument by reversing it - bad move (33). They were so intent on killing Him that they were willing to completely ignore the issue of whether His works backed up His words. They were able to accurately discern what His teaching meant but they never stopped to even consider if it was true. This same skewed logic is used today by those who won't allow Jesus to be God in their lives. They'll readily admit that He did good works, but they won't accept Him as God; they refuse to consider if His works support His claim to be divine.

2nd – Argument from Scripture (34-36). These religious leaders were willfully rejecting His words. So, Jesus shows them that there was nothing about His words that they could fault Him for either. I don't want to get too far into the weeds on this one because the argument Jesus is presenting here, while valid, is also quite technical. It's considered a rabbinical argument: dealing with distinctions important to rabbis but not to most others. Basically, Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. His OT reference is from Ps 82:6 (1-7). Here, the supreme God rises in the divine council to pronounce judgment on beings called 'gods' (elohim). His charge against them is that they administer justice unjustly, giving preference to the wicked instead of upholding the right of the helpless and oppressed.

Now, there's a dispute over whether these are celestial beings or human judges but for our purposes here in ch10, that distinction doesn't matter. The context shows they are inferior to the supreme God and yet, He calls them 'gods'. If God Himself calls them 'gods' (and "children of the Most High" at that), why is it considered a capital offence if the One sent by the Father calls Himself the Son of God? Now, Jesus wasn't denying that He is God in a unique sense. He was only denying that He'd spoken words that were improper. The words are proper enough if spoken merely in relation to created beings. How much more appropriate are they then of Him who is much more than that? So, not only is there nothing in Christ's works to merit stoning, there's nothing in His words to merit stoning either.

3rd – The clincher - The Jews here have painted themselves into a theological corner. Jesus' prior arguments have led them into it. Now He argues, since there was nothing in His words to which these men could properly object and since they, by default, acknowledged His deeds, these deeds alone should have led them to faith in Him as their Messiah. The reality of Christ's works should lead men to faith in Him more so than the

record of His works!

His arguments were sound both in logic and theology but, unfortunately, His enemies were not. They were unmoved by what Jesus said in His defense and they tried to seize (arrest) Him themselves. C. H. Spurgeon remarked that, “If they cannot answer holy arguments with fair reasoning, they can give hard answers with stones. If you cannot destroy the reasoning; you may, perhaps, destroy the reasoner.”

Before we finish off the chapter, we need to take a closer look at something Jesus just said. In the middle of His arguments, there’s a reference to the nature of Scripture that deserves our special attention. In 35, Jesus essentially says, “If the word “gods” can be used of created beings, how much more can it be used of Me?” If He’d said nothing more beyond this, His use of the psalm would be important because He was basing His whole argument on a single word from the OT that He clearly accepted as trustworthy. But He did say more and what He said constitutes a divine affirmation of the Bible’s total inspiration, inerrancy and utter indestructibility – the Scripture cannot be broken.”

We should understand that the high view of Scripture expressed by Jesus here and in many other statements has always been the accepted view of the church until relatively recent times. In the last two centuries or so the orthodox view of the Bible has been denied by large segments of the church so that for many, the Bible has become man’s word about God rather than God’s word to man; and, its authority has been lessened. But this was not always the case. In past ages, even heretics acknowledged that the Bible was infallible and authoritative. That’s not to say that the Bible was always used properly. It might have been neglected; there may’ve been disagreements over what it actually teaches; it might even have been contradicted. But, it was still the only infallible rule of faith and practice. In truth, earlier Christians had a high view of the Bible because the Bible has a high view of itself. They regarded the Bible as the infallible Word of God because the Lord Jesus Himself regarded it as such. His declaration in 35 means, at the very least, that Scripture cannot be wrong (broken into, faulted). Leon Morris defines it as: Scripture cannot be emptied of its force by being shown to be erroneous. Bruce says, “Scripture cannot be annulled or made void; it cannot be set aside when its teaching is inconvenient. What is written remains written.”

This attitude of Jesus towards Scripture is confirmed by other statements made by Him. For one thing, Jesus often appealed to Scripture as an infallible authority. It was His sole defense when tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He used it to debunk the bad theology of the Sadducees concerning the heavenly status of marriage and the reality of the resurrection. He taught that creation would pass away before even the punctuation of Scripture would change (one jot or tittle [Mt 5:18]). Beyond that, Jesus saw His life as a fulfillment of Scripture and consciously submitted Himself to it. He began His ministry by quoting Isa 61:1-2a. In the Sermon on the Mount, He declared that He didn't come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them (Mt 5:7). He told the Jews that the Scriptures (OT) testified of Him (John 5:39) and He instructed the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus about Himself, beginning with Moses and all of the Prophets (Lk 24:25-27).

Jesus esteemed the OT highly and constantly submitted Himself to it as an authoritative revelation. Because they are the words of God, Jesus assumed their reliability even to the smallest point of grammar. In fact, He not only held that the broad themes and ideas of Scripture are inspired, but so are the specific words. The essential point of His 2nd argument rested on 1 word used in a fairly obscure passage, some may even rightly call it run-of-the-mill.

Now, infallibility does not imply completeness, as though the biblical writers were obliged to tell everything that happened at any given moment. John himself said that would be impossible. The Bible doesn't presume to tell us everything there is to know, it merely promises to tell us everything we need to know. Infallibility doesn't mean that all the existing manuscripts of the Bible are free from error; because they're not. The Holy Spirit inspired the original manuscripts, not the scribes who copied them. Infallibility also does not imply the infallibility of interpretations of the Bible. The doctrine of infallibility simply means that in their original form the books of the Bible are free from factual errors and that they possess absolute, binding authority when they present teaching that claims to be from God.

Why is this important? Through the ages people have tried to discredit Scripture and remove it as a force in their lives (Norway). But, it's been those who've tried to destroy the Bible who have been destroyed, not the

Bible. There are many images for the Bible in its own pages. It is called a lamp, a mirror, a sword, a seed. But it is also called a fire and a hammer (**Jer 23:29**). It's a fire because it will burn in judgment and a hammer because it will break in pieces all who will not bow before it. The Word of God cannot be broken – but it will break whatever opposes it!

Will you resist that Word? If so, then you will be broken; for the Scripture cannot be broken. Or will you submit to it and to the Christ who upheld it? The Bible is not just another book. It's God's book, and as such it is powerful. It is powerful enough to change you and it will change you, if you'll let it.

40-42- Jerusalem was the place where Jesus should have been welcomed but instead, they tried to stone Him. Now, He retires to the hinterlands, the boondocks, as it were, and what does He find? Converts! Lots of them! This shows the value of doing the Lord's work at all times. Even though this was a time of retreat from Jerusalem, it was not a time to quit the family business. Jesus may have been driven out of Jerusalem but He was not driven out of the place of God's blessing.

Jesus still faced great opposition from the religious leaders in Jerusalem and their greatest act of opposition was soon to begin. Yet, many people still came to Jesus. They listened to His words and saw His works remembered John's testimony concerning him and were willingly compelled by to acknowledge the truth. God's work went on despite the opposition of man. So take heart! Jesus wasn't always successful in His preaching so don't despair. The night's shadows in your ministry will pass and the day of blessing will dawn!

There's an important application here for the Christian. In our text, Jesus mostly emphasized His works—not His words but His works—and His point is that these works should point men to Him. That's a wonderful argument. But if it's true for Jesus, it's also true in a sense for His followers. If you're a Christian, then you claim to have been saved by Jesus in such a way that His spirit now lives within you and directs your life and life choices. Do you live like it? Is there anything in your life that is evidence of His spirit within you?

The evidence of His Messiahship is the same evidence of our faith. If His

works were necessary to prove who He was, can ours be any less significant? **James** says, “I will show you my faith by my works” (2:18). What do we have to show for our faith – hopefully some good works: acts of obedience to the Father and acts of blessing to men? 😊