

## John 10:31-39

### Let Your Works Defend You

#### INTRODUCTION

Last time we were in John 10 we saw Jewish Religious leaders cornering Jesus and pressuring Him to make a legal statement that He was the Messiah. They would use this statement against Him. It never occurred to many of them that He might actually be the Messiah and Son of God. Jesus responded with a statement that we covered the last time we were in John text. When asked whether He was the Messiah Jesus answered; ***26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one.***”

There are two statements that were sure to be controversial. First, Jesus claimed in verse 28 that He is the one who gives eternal life. The giving of eternal life is reserved for God alone. Yet Jesus claims to be the life giver.

Second and Perhaps His most controversial statement was when He said; ***“I and the Father are one.”*** This means Jesus and The Father are of one substance. Jesus and The Father are one in power and position and authority. This was the clear statement demanded by His detractors and they will use it against Him.

We know his detractors understood Jesus claimed to be equal with The Father because in verse 33 we find the Jewish crowd picking up stones in order to kill Jesus. Let's read the text together.

### **READING THE TEXT**

**31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" 33 The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? 35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— 36 do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? 37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." 39 Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.**

### **PREACHING THE TEXT**

**<sup>31</sup> The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.**

This is not the first time unbelieving Jews have tried to kill Jesus.

**John 8:58-59 (ESV)**

<sup>58</sup> ***Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”*** <sup>59</sup> ***So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.***

Just like today's text we see people picking up stones to throw at Jesus because He claimed the title of God in one case, and equality with God in today's text. In John 8 when asked whether He was greater than Abraham Jesus told those gathered that He knew Abraham and in fact was there before Abraham existed. It was as if Jesus was saying;

*If you want to make such a big deal out of Abraham and you keep bragging about being related to him, know that I was there before Abraham.*

Then Jesus referred to Himself as ***“I Am.”*** This is a clear reference to the title God used when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush. In other words,

*before Abraham came along I was speaking to Moses from the burning bush.*

Therefore Jesus claimed to be much greater than Abraham in front of Jews who bragged about being related to Abraham. Jesus not only knew Abraham, Jesus was the God of Abraham. He was the God of Moses who spoke from the burning bush. He was the God who walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. And now He has come in the flesh.

In today's passage Jesus claims to be God's Son. He said; ***“I and the Father are one.”*** This is more than stating that He is on the same page with the Father. When He claimed to be “one with The Father” He was

claiming the kind of oneness that is shared by a Father and Son who work together with the same purpose and heart. When you see Jesus and His work you see the will of The Father expressed. Jesus is the one that by His works allows us to see the Father.

## BLINDNESS VS OBJECTIVITY

So Jesus tries to break through the violent madness that is about to take over the group by changing their focus from his words to His deeds. When someone has made an enemy of you there is a kind of blindness that comes over that person which shuts down conversations and objectivity. It's this blindness that tempts us to put labels on others. When our pride or ego are challenged and spiritual blindness comes over us we fail to see people as God sees them. And when we depersonalize others we are capable of terrible things. When we dehumanize or label others we can gossip, slander and even murder.

## DEHUMANIZING and PICKING UP STONES

We see this kind of blindness and dehumanizing in the recent elections. Those who vote for Trump supposedly voted for racism as one of my friends put it. Yet of my hundreds of friends who voted for Trump I can not find a hint of racism. It works the other way too. I spoke with friends who are very liberal in their theology and politics. The only thing they keep coming back to me with is a strong desire to see the poor fed, racism end and people have good healthcare. They believe the government has a large role in assuring those things occur. Are those really bad desires? I don't think government is the institution that can change hearts and make

us care for the poor. And usually the government screws up more than it fixes. But can I label and hate on people because they want the poor fed and think the government is the answer?

## WE CAN SEE PAST THE LABELS

With the help of The Holy Spirit we are the people who are best equipped to see past the labels and have civil conversations with just about anyone. We are best equipped to break down the walls that divide people and help others see the love of Christ.

Jesus confronted sin, especially pride and spiritual blindness among powerful religious leaders. These leaders would seek to put a label on you, dehumanize you and then either shun you or kill you.

## SEE ME!

Jesus challenged the status quo and what is the first thing they try to do in response? They seek to label Jesus as demonized. Yes He does miracles but He does so by the power of demons. But the crowds do not go away so the Jewish Religious Leaders have secret meetings to find a way to label and dehumanize Jesus and turn the crowds against Him.

Jesus asked people to think past the labels and slander campaign. He asked them to look at His works and what He did instead of the label that was thrust upon Him. It's not because Jesus needs friends and needs people to like Him that He asks His audience to think past the labels. It's because there is something at stake. Those who truly see Jesus for who He is may believe and gain eternal life. So Jesus sees people picking up

rocks to kill Him and He tries to remove their blindness by changing the focus from an argument about titles to his miraculous works which actually prove that He must be from God. Who else would carry God's power but someone that had God's blessing.

**<sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"**

### GOOD WORKS FROM THE FATHER

Notice the works are not just the works of Jesus, they are works from The Father. The slander campaign is set up to present Jesus as an opponent of The Father. Jesus is claiming that He and the Father are not opponents. Rather Jesus is carrying out the works that The Father thought up. If The Father was not on board with Jesus then how could Jesus heal people, cast out demons and calm the wind and waves with a command?

But the Pharisees are so locked in with their dismissive labels that they would reject Jesus even if he parted the Mediterranean Sea.

The truth is it takes a miracle to truly see and appreciate Jesus or anyone for who they really are with the mind and heart of God. And it takes the grace of God to see another person if they challenge your long held practices or assumptions.

**<sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."**

### NOT FOR WORKS BUT BLASPHEMY

They don't care if Jesus spins the moon on His finger their assumptions and power are threatened and they will not see Him as He is. It cost too much. So now Jesus appeals to their head if He can't win their hearts. So he tries to reason with them so they will stop freaking out about His title and the words He used to describe Himself.

<sup>34</sup> **Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’? Let’s take a look at the text quoted by Jesus and then understand His main point in quoting this passage.**

#### **PSALM 82 REFERENCES ABOVE:**

**Psalm 82 God has taken his place in the divine council;  
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:**

**2 “How long will you judge unjustly  
and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah***

**3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;  
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.**

**4 Rescue the weak and the needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”**

**5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding,  
they walk about in darkness;  
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.**

**6 I said, “You are gods,  
sons of the Most High, all of you;**

**7 nevertheless, like men you shall die,  
and fall like any prince.”**

**8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;**

**for you shall inherit all the nations!**

So Jesus points out that even mere humans are called gods and sons of the Most High God. The sense is that like God is over the universe and all creation we people are the highest order of creature in the earth. We have an overseeing function on earth like God Himself oversees all of creation. And the word of God came to the Jews so they have a spiritual responsibility and great honor of making God known to the world.

**<sup>35</sup> If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—<sup>36</sup> do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?**

In other words do not try to kill me based on a technicality related to my title. I use the term “Son of God.” And in a manner of speaking God Himself called people gods with a small “g.” So let’s not freak out about words. **Let’s instead focus on works.** Because works has always been the proof as to whether a Prophet is from God.

**DA Carson**

*This Scripture proves that the word ‘god’ is legitimately used to refer to others than God himself. If there are others whom God (the author of Scripture) can address as ‘god’ and ‘sons of the Most High’ (i.e. sons of God), on what biblical basis should anyone object when Jesus says, I am God’s Son? ...END CARSON QUOTE*

**<sup>37</sup> If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;**



So Jesus is saying; Let's get back to what matters most. Let's get back to what proves every person's heart. Am I or am I not doing the works of my Father? Is healing a blind man the work of God? Is healing a lame person the work of a man or God The Father? Is casting out demons and turning water into wine, walking on the water and calming storms a work of a man or a work of God The Father?

### SEEING PAST THE LABELS

That is a really good word for the way we judge others. If we are tempted to put a label on others and dismiss them look at their works. We are tempted to judge on appearances, on clothing, on what family someone comes from, and how much education someone has. We judge by making minor points of doctrine into mountains. We judge people based on who they voted for.

But the real question to ask is whether they are feeding the poor, loving their neighbor, serving others, giving generously or following through with their obligations? Are they comforting those who grieve and praying for others sincerely? If they are then that person is not the enemy. They may be deceived and have some messed up ideas but we must reserve the hating for the devil. So also Jesus insists that His accusers look at His works.

<sup>38</sup> **but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works,** <sup>(38 continued)</sup> **that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."**

You may not be persuaded by my words and logic but look at what I do and ask yourself; “would a demonized person and a liar seek to heal and bless and serve and give generously?” Here is their open minded graceful response.

**<sup>39</sup> Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.**

Even with all the logic and proof of His works Jesus had enemies that He could not win over. Don't be surprised when people turn against you for your faith or for no reason at all. There are some people that will have spiritual blindness and they will not see you. But know that God sees you. He sees more than your words. He sees your heart. And He sees how you are putting your faith into action. Jesus called attention to His works so apparently the practice of our faith in everyday life really matters to God.

### **TAKING IT HOME**

1. What are some ways that you are seeking to discern and do the will of The Father like Jesus did?
2. In what ways have you been tempted to label other people?
3. In what ways have you been labeled and dismissed?
4. Do you have Spirit led works of love, serving, grace, healing and prayer that speak for you and back up your words and testimony?