

Revisiting "Sonship" Part 4 John R Gavazzoni

This installment in our series will have a definite confrontational element to it in order for me to reinforce and clarify my insistence that all men are the children of God. I have heard "through the grapevine," that I have seriously ruffled feathers by including such an affirmation as being fundamental to the understanding of sonship.

At the encouragement of a father in the faith, I will attempt to shore up my case in the simplest manner possible, beginning with an affirmation of sonship that was made by the Lord Jesus regarding those who he described as being evil and judgmental hypocrites.

If the Lord Jesus included such manner of men in the family of God, then it ought to help us understand the principle, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh." It seems that regardless of the hostility toward Him that arose out of lie-darkened hearts, the Lord still embraced all men as His brethren. Is that simply wishful thinking on my part or is it really scriptural?

For an answer to that question, I refer you to Matt. 7:11, where the following statement of our Lord is recorded: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall YOUR Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him." (NAS, emphasis, mine). Now I assure you that I can be empathetic to anyone who still has his needle stuck in a fundamentalist groove when faced with this perspective of Jesus regarding sonship.

In my early years as a fundamentalist evangelist, I much preferred majoring on the Lord's shocking indictment, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." That statement had more get-'em-to-the-altar teeth to it, whereas anything suggesting "the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man," would set me off on a tirade against what I had been taught was just one more example of the ignorance of "those liberals" who refused to believe what the Bible taught about mankind.

Now I would hope, when faced with what seems to be a serious discrepancy in the record of our Lord's understanding of man's generation, one would wonder just what was His view of mankind in respect to our relationship with the Father. Oh dear, here we go again, with the necessity to remind bible students how important it is to interpret the Bible in context.

How could the Lord refer to men as both children of God and children of the Devil? It is obvious from the contexts in which He made both statements that He included, on both occasions, men of evil disposition.

Context, brethren, context. If you assume to practice hermeneutics (the science of interpretation, especially biblical), you must practice it IN CONTEXT, and in comparing scripture with scripture, you must allow---by the Spirit's inspiration, of course---scripture to explain scripture.

When we examine closely the contexts in which Jesus ascribed a satanic identity to people, something very enlightening, and consistent with God's Fatherhood is revealed in the text. We find that the "person"

Jesus speaks to was not truth-constituted, or truth-identified. "He" is the person who does not "know as we are known," he knows himself "after/according to the flesh." Knowing oneself after the flesh, is to be deceived into accepting a false persona, and the Lord must deal with such a travesty most firmly.

In addition to Jesus' ascribing Devil fatherhood to men in Jn.8:44, we have a similar incident in His dealing with Peter, an apostle of the Lord, no less. You'll recall the incident, I'm sure. Peter had just received the Lord's commendation for his revelation and confession of who Jesus was, i.e., "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

(Matt.16:16).

Jesus commends Peter's revelation as coming from the Father, and affirms Peter's identification with Himself, with the words, "Thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Then the narrative immediately moves on, as one might expect, to our Lord's explanation of His coming passion:

"From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

Well, brother Pete went from the sublime to the ridiculous, in short order, didn't he? One moment he's full of revelation, and according to Jesus, in respect to his confession, he's become identified with the rock-foundation of the church, Christ, Himself, and the next moment, he's standing there with carnal-minded pie all over his face.

Jesus could not ignore such a blatant mindset of contrariness to the "the cross set before Him." Instantly, Jesus recognizes the voice of the Adversary as Peter's alter-persona, a counterfeit of who Peter really was in Christ, and He says to that Satan-invented, lie-constituted, false identity, "Get thee behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interest, but man's."

I hope you can grasp the fact that, when Peter spoke in such a way so contrary to Jesus mission, the Lord, though speaking to him, does not call him, Peter; He calls him Satan.

In other words, the Lord refuses to recognize that projected persona as Peter's identity, though it was operating through him, he speaks to the persona of the alienated, and alienating carnal mind which is enmity ("the carnal mind is enmity against God), which is the essence of "the enemy."

When Peter spoke by the Spirit of Christ, Jesus replies to him according to the truth of Peter's identity: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Brethren, you'll always find that split-off-from-reality persona in the context when Jesus speaks so harshly to people, He is taking aim at exposing the counterfeit persona that constitutes the kingdom of darkness.

That's why, on one occasion He could affirm folks as children of God, yet on another occasion, speak to that aeonian anti-Christ persona that had taken over the consciousness of ones who were really, as to their spiritual origin, as to their reality within the Reality, children of God.

Another example of this is found in Matt. 7:21-23. The subject has to do with those who expect entrance into the kingdom through their religious profession and performance: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' "

When, out of the enmity of the carnal mind, we present to the Lord an identity of self-righteousness as that which makes us worthy of His kingdom, the Lord refuses to accept that identity of us. To that projected identity, He says, "I never knew you, depart from me." He knows who we are, and will not acknowledge any other identity than that which He, and our Father knows as us. Not only will he refuse to acknowledge such, but He casts it out of His presence.

The Father knows us all as His children; even when we do not know ourselves as such. I have heard brethren many times try to sidestep scripture's affirmation of our God-generation, by saying that, except for those who are born again, if God refers to people as His children, it is only in the sense that He has created them. No, we are, all of us, both the fruit of His loins, and the work of His hands.

It is not God's creativeness that makes us His children, it is by His Seed, by divine impregnation, conception and birth that we are children of God. Our creaturehood is a matter of our being sent into the space-time continuum and into material formation, but He has known us, and chosen us as His children, His sons, from eternity.

I have to say to some of my brethren, "are you a teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?" Do you not understand that if we experience REgeneration in the aeon, it is because we were generated in eternity. If there is REbirth, there must have been birth. If God is an eternal Father, by nature, He can only have eternal sons. We are eternal sons in the Son, children born of the extension of that singular Seed, the Christ.

In His wisdom, He has given us creaturely form in the aeon, in which we forgot our eternal family, but by the regeneration of His Spirit, through Christ Jesus, our Lord, we REMember, we are returned to that MEMBERship in the family of God, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

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