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We have looked in the latest article at the progression from “THE FATHER, to OUR FATHER and the ultimate “MY FATHER” relationship with God, but there is also a danger of regression to “YOUR FATHER.”

The Jews claimed that they were the children of Abraham by birth but Jesus in the 8TH chapter of JOHN’S gospel addresses the teachers of the Law with these words; “For you are the children of your father, the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning and a hater of truth.” He is not speaking about their earthly parents but their “SPIRITUAL FATHER” who they revealed by their behaviour.

This is about as radical a statement as you can get because it divides men into two camps. The Jewish interpretation of the Law of Moses produced both a belief and practice that Jesus saw as an expression of Satan not God. They said; “He is demon possessed and raving mad.” How can this be? They memorised huge portions of scripture, obeyed the 613 laws as well as their man made traditions so how could they possibly be children of the devil?

The reason is found in Paul’s explanation in Romans 8; “The law never succeeded in producing righteousness – the failure was always human nature.” (PHILLIPS) Self righteous works only produces pride. Pride was the first sin and Satan the first sinner and as the rest of God’s creation he reproduces after his own kind. All efforts of Christians (or variations of Christianity), Muslims, or any other religion that relies on self achievement, however noble in appearance is simply a reflection of their father the devil.

Yes, all the nice, good people, works of charity, self sacrifice, etc. from the highest positions in government, churches or nations belong to the devil. We easily accept the lives of evil dictators as the fruit of Satan, but how do we classify nice Christians and people who run International Charities? *The good are always the biggest enemy of the best.*

So what’s the problem? The root issue is SELF. We have made even the nice self, the kind loving self central and in doing so we have replaced God as the centre of our universe. That’s exactly what Satan did and the Bible tells us that he can appear as an “Angel of light.” The real motive of the heart is revealed when the “nice people” are challenged. Jesus confrontation with the religious of His day caused them to be so insulted that it exposed the murder that was already deeply embedded in their hearts. We say we are kind and caring but when our true motive is exposed we join the crowd and cry “Crucify Him.”

This is why the first “Beautiful Attitude” in Matthew’s gospel is humility. Humility enables me to see myself in the light of God so that I quickly admit that I am a sinner in need of forgiveness and the grace to become the FATHER’S SON – at least for a little while. Then I find that feeling rising up in me that I am not such a bad person after all; look how I tithe, read the scriptures, attend meetings, worship and pray. All of these are vital disciplines but my heart can turn the most beautiful of experiences into reflections of my previous father by pride. I am torn between two camps, one of self righteousness and one of utter despair and failure. I often oscillate between the two opposite poles.

Paul said that it is “Not by works of righteousness that we have done but by his mercy that he has saved us.” This keeps us from the consuming danger of pride.

I need to be aware that I am on a journey towards a destiny that completes itself with God. Life can be cruel, unkind and unforgiving but as we keep our hearts humble before Him He gives us the grace to continue to the end and God Himself is the final destination; *THE FATHER, OUR FATHER AND MY FATHER.* Shalom.

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