

“The Model of Godliness”

May 25, 2014

Text: John 8:48-53

On Dec. 23, 1776, 3 days before the Battle of Trenton, these words from a pamphlet called *The American Crisis* were read aloud to American soldiers=>

“These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.... Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”

The American army, led by George Washington, won that battle, it changed the course of the Revolutionary War, and thus changed the history of this country.

In a similar spirit, Jesus warned His disciples that there is a price to be paid for true discipleship; He said=>

“It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, & the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!” (Mt 10:25).

Those who seek to follow Jesus as their Savior/Lord, & as the model for their own godliness, have always had to endure persecution from people whose spiritual father is the devil. Their character has been slandered by the false/outrageous stories of Satan’s liars.

And there have invariably been Xns willing to swallow those lies about their character/conduct.

Jesus' true disciples should never be surprised by this kind of treatment, but they can learn from Him how to deal w/ it.

In today's text, Jesus' enemies will actually accuse Him of being demonized—this is nothing short of blasphemy.

But as Peter would later write=> *“While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”*
(I Pet 2:23).

As our text will show, Jesus answered w/ calm/gentle/reasonable patience, & He used the occasion to declare a great truth.

The model of godliness Jesus sets before us here, teaches us that, when accusations from Satan's children come flying at us fast/furiously, nothing overcomes their frenzied rage more effectively than our calm/unshaken confidence in the Truth, declaring what we have learned from our Savior/Master.

In today's text, we see Jesus as a model of godliness for us to follow, in the face of dishonor/doubt...

*** Dishonor**

[John 8:48]=> *“The Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’”*

Most Jews despised/hated the Samaritans.

They considered them half-breeds w/ no Jewish loyalties, and a heretical religion by which they worshiped at Mt. Gerizim rather than the only true Temple in Jerusalem.

In 4:9 said of the Jews that they=> *“have no dealings with Samaritans.”*

Calling Jesus a Samaritan was simply the meanest thing they could think of to say about Him.

It was nothing more than a vindictive expression of their hatred/animosity.

And their adding “*Do we not say rightly*” heightened this insult, by implying this was the common opinion among them about Him.

The accusation that Jesus had a demon may have been their tit-for-tat reaction to His saying their father was the devil. They meant that He had submitted to the control/influence of a demon, & had therefore gone insane.

By Jn 10:20, many of the religious leaders will be openly declaring=> “*He has a demon and is insane.*”

And in Mt 12 we find the Pharisees telling people =>

“*This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons*” (12:24).

Because the Jews were not able to answer Jesus’ statements w/ reasonable arguments of their own, they resorted to the most abusive kind of character assassination.

You have to wonder if they had no fear of God at all.

One of the thieves being crucified next to Jesus rebuked the other thief for saying something much less offensive/scandalous about X than what the Jews in our text had said.

His rebuke was=> “*Do you not even **fear God**, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?*”

It was based on the fact that they were both about to die & stand before God to be judged (Lk 23:40-41).

The Jews who were blaspheming Jesus by accusing Him of being demonized, seem to have had no such fear of God, or God's judgment, at all.

Now we see how Jesus dealt w/ this outrageous allegation that He was under the control of a demon.

He didn't respond to their calling Him a Samaritan at all, unwilling to even acknowledge/dignify such unjust racial prejudice.

[Verse 49]=> *"Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon.'"*

Jesus graciously gave them a serious answer, making Him the model for us to follow, of godly sincerity & concern for men's souls.

It would be easy just to simply write off people like these folks w/ Jesus, & walk away in disgust, because of what seems to be the pettiness & insincerity of their accusation, that Jesus had a demon.

It seems to have been nothing but a cheap shot at Someone they loathed.

But we see no sarcasm/cynicism on Jesus' part—just a straightforward/truthful response to their accusation.

When Jesus said simply, *"I do not have a demon,"* His opponents would prob. have thought cynically=> *"Of course, you'd say that! But we say you do!"*

Jesus chose to give them the plain/simple truth nonetheless, and just to let them decide for themselves what they'd do w/ it. If any of them were sincerely open to the truth at all, they'd have His solemn assurance that it wasn't true—that He wasn't demonized.

Having denied any demonic influence in His life, Jesus explained what it was that actually motivated Him=> His own determination to honor His Heavenly Father.

[Verse 49b] (Jesus)=> *“but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.”*

Jesus honored His Father by submitting to Him in everything He said/did—as the Father's Representative on earth.

When He'd declared that their spiritual father was the devil, He did so according to the Father's will/direction.

That meant Jesus' Jewish listeners, by dishonoring Him, were actually dishonoring God the Father as well.

Again, Jesus provides a model for us to follow whenever our own opponents attack us, our motives, & our wisdom in declaring the truth of God's Word.

We are simply to tell the truth, even if our doing so makes us sound naïve, or if people suspect us of self-serving motives.

Paul followed Jesus' example when Festus made the same kind of accusation against him, shouting=> *“Paul, you are out of your mind!”* (Acts 26:24, 25).

Paul might have thought, “If he thinks I'm mad, what's the use of trying to tell him the truth about anything?”

Instead, Paul like his Lord just relied on the power of simple truth, humbly saying, *“I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.”*

Then he continued to tell Festus the truth.

The Jews decided in their own minds that X must be motivated by an insatiable desire for personal honor/glory.

They had seen a number of false teachers about whom that was true, and they were honor-seekers themselves.

X said of the scribes/Pharisees=> *“They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, / & respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men”* (Mt 23:6-7).

So the Jews in our text projected those same motives onto Jesus, interpreting everything He said as attempted glory-seeking.

* E.g. X had said, *“You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world”* (8:23).

Their reaction was to assume that wasn't true but that Jesus was just trying to gain honor for Himself, at their expense.

If X really weren't from above, they'd have been right, but the reality was that His words simply expressed the truth about His origins/nature.

* Jesus also said=> *“Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”* (8:24).

Again, refusing to believe His words, the Jews probably viewed this as more glory-seeking.

* Their reaction was undoubtedly the same in verse 42 of this chapter, when Jesus said=> *“I proceeded forth and have come from God”* (8:42).

This was no empty boast—He really had come from God, but they weren’t about to believe it.

How could anyone who had the right to make such amazing, extraordinary claims, deal w/ the skepticism of those who heard them, but simply refused to accept/believe them?

The only thing he could do, is what Jesus did=> Tell the truth, make the claims, & depend on the H.S. to open people’s minds, & drive the truth home to their hearts.

The truth was, that Jesus was only doing what God the Father had told Him to do, seeking to honor the Father in His doing so.

When X’s opponents dishonored Him w/ their accusations, they also dishonored the Father who had sent Him.

Now Jesus set the record straight about His true motives/motivation.

[Verse 50]=> *“But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.”*

Jesus was not seeking the honor of men—that wasn’t His purpose in life.

What He cared about, was the honor/approval of God the Father.

He is the One who will judge such things, and that's what really matters.

But the Father does desire that men honor His Son.

Phil 2 says, because Jesus emptied/humbled Himself, even to the point of death on the cross=>

*“God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, / so that at the name of Jesus **every knee will bow**, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, / and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (2:9-11).*

Because the Father desires for men to honor Him, by honoring His Son, He will judge those who refuse to honor Him—or worse yet, who dishonor Him.

We, like Jesus, can deal w/ dishonor in this life, knowing that the honor of God Himself awaits us in the future.

Paul told the Colossians (3:4)=> *“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed then you also will be revealed with Him **in glory**.”*

And Rev 20:6 promises that in X's Kingdom, believers *“will be priests of God and of Christ and will **reign with Him** for a thousand years.”*

This future prospect is honor enough for us.

* **Doubt**

Jesus, the model of godliness from whom we learn how to deal dishonor, also teaches us how to deal w/ others' doubt.

The Jews were going to express their doubt about X's next claim.

But He was omniscient God, so He knew beforehand exactly what they'd say.

He didn't equivocate, but addressed those doubts ahead of time directly/boldly/decisively, by declaring the truth.

And in the process, He declared for us all one of the great truths that we who believe in X hold most dear/precious to our hearts.

[Verse 51] (Jesus)=> *“Truly, truly, I say to you... [a word formula which means that what X is about to say, is solemn truth, spoken with earnestness/gravity], if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.”*

What a promise this is!

If anyone keeps X's word—by believing it, receiving/holding it w/i his heart, wholeheartedly embracing/obeying it—he will not see death.

Jesus was clearly not talking about physical death, because He and each one of His Apostles did die physically.

He meant eternal spiritual death—“2nd death.”

Notice the blessed irony here=> X was making this magnanimous offer to people who had just impugned His character and blasphemed His name.

His motive was not to gain acceptance/honor among them.

It was simply done out of His divine love for them.

This was Jesus living out His own words, *“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you”*
(Lk 6:28).

This is a parallel to what He'd said back in Jn 5=> *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life”* (Jn 5:24).

What precisely does Jesus' promise mean?

To understand it, we must 1st clarify the particular word for “see” used here—*theorese*, to look/gaze upon as a spectator.

Our word “theater” comes from the root of this word.

Commentator B.F. Westcott defined *theorese* as=>

“the long, steady, exhaustive vision, whereby we become slowly acquainted with the nature of the object to which it is directed.”

When the H.S. enlightens a sinner to the magnitude of his sin, he's transfixed, looking at the death by which his sin will be punished, gazing at it, anxiously contemplating its future implications for him, w/ a growing sense of alarm/doom. He can't get his eyes (or his mind) off of death. He sees it as the overwhelming/inescapable wrath of God, and he sees himself as its inevitable/eternal victim. It's a death that never stops dying, & which destroys all of life.

But then the gospel of Jesus X comes to this person, he keeps X's word by faith, and it turns him completely around.

No longer is he fixated upon death, unable to look away and turn away from its horror—he now turns his back to death, knowing it's safe for him to ignore it from now on; that death has died to him.

So what is he now facing? Eternal life in Jesus X, who
said=> *“I am the resurrection & the life; he who
believes in Me will live even if he dies, & everyone
who lives & believes in Me will never die”*
(Jn 11:25-26).

**There’s another application of Jesus’ words in our text, *“If
anyone keeps My word he will never see death.”***

They mean that, for Xns, spiritual death is a thing of the past—
gone, never to return.

Before they believed in Jesus & became born again, spiritual
death surrounded them, permeating their whole lives.

Their prayers were dead, their faith was dead, they were
“dead in [their] trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1).

After the gospel came to them in the power of the H.S., they saw
life, so they no longer reveled in their old dead life of sin.

When temptation came, they now did what once they didn’t
do=> prayed to God to deliver them from it, as grace
freed them from the reign of sin/death in their lives.

Physical death had been a divine penalty to them—an extension
of God’s word to Adam, *“In the day that you eat from it
you will surely die”* (Gen 2:17).

But now death had changed its nature for believers, & was
simply a falling asleep—no longer a penal execution.

Before they were born again, it had been a penal execution for
them just as it was for their forefather, Adam.

They died physically, like him, because of original sin.

But when they became saved, that penal sentence of death no longer applied to them.

We know that because, when X returns at the Rapture and calls believers who are alive & remain up to meet Him in the air, they will be changed w/o dying.

They too will have been born sinners, but they will never experience physical death, proving that it is no longer part of the penalty for sin to those who are born again.

So why do believers die?

Death has become simply a departure for them, out of the turmoil of this world, into the glory of their beloved Savior/Lord.

A 3rd application of X's promise to 1 who keeps His word=> He no longer needs to dread death.

Before, his fear of death was like a slavery, as he dreaded its approach and whatever it is that follows death, in eternity.

Now the sting of death (which is sin) has been plucked out.

Now, instead of dread, he can say w/ Paul=> *"I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to **depart** and be with Christ, for that is very much better"* (Phil 1:23).

One old hymn beautifully expressed the thought that, if we could see the saints who have gone on before us, we'd want to join them.

That old hymn went like this=>

“How we should scorn these robes of flesh,
These fetters and this load!
And long for evening to undress,
That we may rest in God.
We should almost forsake our clay
Before the summons come
And pray and wish our souls away
To their eternal Home.”

**One final application of the principle that a believer never
sees death=> He will never face the wrath of God.**

That’s what “2nd Death” is all about—final/eternal separation
from God, in which His love is forever withdrawn, and
man’s soul is cast into the ruinous misery of God’s holy
wrath.

But Rev 2:11 assures the believer=> “*He who overcomes
[thru faith in X] will not be hurt by the second death.*”

Believers can turn their backs on the horror of such a destiny, and
forever rest in the assurance/confidence of God’s grace.

Hebrews 2 says of Jesus=> “*Since the children share in
flesh & blood, He Himself likewise also partook of
the same, that thru death He might render powerless
him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,
/and might free those who through **fear of death** were
subject to slavery all their lives*” (Heb 2:14-15).

We need never again fear God’s condemnation, because
X’s death has freed us (Rom 8:1)=> “*There is now
no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”

Nor is there any need for us to fear the loss of Jesus’ love.

Rom 8 asks rhetorically, “*Who will separate us from
the love of Christ?*” (8:35);

Then it goes on to show that nothing/no-one ever could.

Just as Jesus already knew they would, the Jews listening to Him responded w/ doubt to all His wonderful words.

[Verses 52-53]=> *“The Jews said to Him, ‘Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’ / Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?’”*

As usual, they interpret X’s words literally to mean physical death, but He had been talking about spiritual death beyond spiritual death—2nd death, in which a person is forever placed outside the reach of God’s grace/life/love.

The Jews reasoned that, if the best of men—Abraham and the prophets—weren’t immune from the physical death that had resulted from Adam’s sin, then Jesus certainly wasn’t either.

Not only had He said He could overcome death Himself, but that He also had the power to enable others to escape from & overcome it, if they would keep His words.

This all sounded so crazy to these faithless Jewish people, they considered it proof positive that demons had driven Jesus mad.

The thought that He could accomplish what Abraham and the prophets couldn't, & was therefore greater than Abraham, was insanity to them.

Either that, or it was attempted fraud, as He pretended to be something He wasn't, & which no one could ever be.

Thus they ask, "*Whom do You make Yourself out to be?*"

Jesus had already told them that, although the Father sought glory for Him, X sought no glory for Himself;

His only desire was to honor His Father.

But they refused to believe that.

The questions they should have been open-mindedly asking were,

"Who is Jesus? If He is the Son of God, & truly can keep people from seeing death, how should we respond to Him?"

But instead, they asked, "Who are you trying to hoodwink others into believing you are?"

Because of their unbelief/unwillingness-to-believe, they'd see death, taste it, smell/feel/groan-under it—forever.

But if you/I will simply place our faith in Jesus, trusting in His death as the payment that satisfies God's wrath for our sin, His death will become our death, and we will never be plagued by the real horrors of death again.

Any man/woman who keeps X's word—believing/obeying it—becomes bonded w/ Him, & he/she will never see death.

As God spoke a word, and physical life sprang into existence at the time of creation, so X instantly creates spiritual life in us thru faith in His word.

What He said/taught, being received into our hearts by faith becomes not only the Source of our new life, but the Nourisher/Sustainer of it—making it eternal life.

And that makes death irrelevant, for believers.

And that brings glory to the name of Jesus X.

Is Jesus greater than Abraham and the prophets?

Of course He is, because He is God incarnate.

Their words could never give people life spiritually.

But Jesus' words, planted like little seeds of life in hearts which the H.S. has cultivated/prepared, spring forth into eternal life.

Theirs is a faith which truly listens to Jesus' words, takes hold of them, depends on them for their survival, treasures them, and obeys them out of love-for and confidence-in Him.

And they gratefully praise the name of their Savior/Lord, as they draw near to God, through Him.

The question that remains to be answered is this=>

* Do you yourself believe in Jesus' promise of pardoned sin, eternal life, and immunity from spiritual death for anyone who, in obedience to His word, confesses/forsakes his sin?

- * Is Jesus' "*Truly, truly, I say to you*" convincing enough for you to cause you to hang your soul's welfare on His promise, that anyone who believes in Him will never see death?
- * Has He become for you, the Model of godliness, who has forever replaced death w/ eternal life?

“The Model of Godliness”

May 25, 2014

Text: John 8:48-53

1. Those who seek to follow Jesus as their Savior and Lord, and as the model for their own godliness, have always had to endure [24 persecution].

Mt 10:25; 1 Pet 2:23

2. When accusations from Satan’s children come at us, nothing overcomes their frenzied rage more effectively than our calm, unshaken confidence in the [12 Truth].

In today’s text we see Jesus as a model of godliness for us to follow in the face of dishonor and of doubt...

*** Dishonor**

[John 8:48]

Jn 4:9; 10:20; Mt 12:24

3. Because the Jews were not able to answer Jesus’ statements with reasonable arguments of their own, they resorted to abusive [20 character] assassination.

Lk 23:40, 41

[Verse 49]

4. Having denied any demonic influence in His life, Jesus explained what motivated Him: His own determination to [12 honor] His Heavenly Father.

[Verse 49b]

Acts 26:24, 25

5. The Jews decided in their own minds that Christ must be motivated by an insatiable desire for personal [12 honor] and glory.

Mt 23:6-7; Jn 8:23, 24, 42

[Verse 50]

6. Jesus was not seeking the honor of men; what He cared about was the honor and approval of [8 God] the Father.

Phil 2:9-11; Col 3:4; Rev 20:6

* **Doubt**

[Verse 51]

7. If anyone “keeps” Christ’s word by believing it, receiving and holding it within his heart, wholeheartedly embracing and obeying it, he will [8 not] see death.

Lk 6:28; Jn 5:24

8. When the Holy Spirit enlightens a sinner to the magnitude of his sin, he is transfixed looking at the death by which his [8 sin] will be punished.

Jn 11:25-26; Eph 2:1

9. After the gospel came to Christians in the power of the Holy Spirit, they saw real life, so they no longer reveled in their old [10 dead] life of sin.

Gen 2:17

10. A third application of Christ’s promise to one who keeps His word: He no longer needs to [12 dread] death.

Phil 1:23

11. One final application of the principle: A believer will never face the [12 wrath] of God.

Rev 2:11; Heb 2:14-15; Rom 8:1; 8:35

[Verses 52-53]

12. The Jews reasoned that, if the best of men—Abraham and the prophets—weren’t immune from physical death, then [12 Jesus] certainly wasn’t.

13. If you and I will simply place our faith in Jesus, trusting in His death for our sin, His death will become our death, and we will never be plagued by the real horrors of [12 death] again.

14. Has He become for you the Model of godliness, who has forever replaced [12 death] with eternal life?