

Real Disciples (7): The Children of God

I. Introduction

- A. In 1999, a man with a broken nose and head injury came into Toronto hospital
1. He lapsed into a coma, and when he woke up unable to remember anything
 - a. He was in mid 20's, educated, well-dressed; diagnosed "*global amnesia*"
 - b. Press call him "*Mr. Nobody*" (nurse thought he mumble "*Philip Staufen*")
 - c. He lived in Canada 5 years as man without a country, identity or name
 2. Last year, article in *GQ* revealed his real name-- Ciprian Skeid of Romania
 - a. He came from an abusive family and served in the Romanian army
 - b. He faked the amnesia, "*I'd rather be a fake nobody than the real me*"
 3. Which is worse—FORGET who you are or CHOOSE to be someone else?
- B. The people of God in **Numbers 13** seem to have done both of these.
1. This should have been one of the most dramatic moments in Israel's history
 - a. God had led them out of Egypt and to the brink of the Promised Land.
 - 1) They had God humble Egyptians and shake Mt Sinai with presence.
 - 2) They were fed by God in desert and protected by God from enemies.
 - b. Now God was ready to lead them into land He had promised Abraham
 2. In Numbers 13, Moses sent men into Canaan to explore this new land
 - a. Spies saw the "milk and honey" of the land, but that wasn't they stress
 - 1) What they stressed were giants and fortifications (**Num 13:28-29**)
 - 2) So they forgot who they were... and who God was (**Num 13:32-33**)
 - b. Israel didn't just forget identity, but chose to be someone else (**14:2-4**)
 - 1) Israel wanted to go back and be slaves again; that identity was better
 - 2) When Moses and Aaron pleaded, they wanted to stone them (**14:10**)
 3. Understand, this generation had some real faith issues from the get go
 - a. They grumbled and complained to Moses (God) about food and water
 - b. And every time they grumbled, they wanted to go back to being slaves
 - 1) They forgot their identity, who they were, as chosen people of God
 - 2) And so they wanted to give up, go back and be someone else.

- C. John's church at the end of first century was having a huge identity problem
 - 1. False teachers were convincing many that faith in Christ wasn't enough
 - a. They denied Jesus really came in flesh; they denied the need to obey God
 - b. They replaced historic faith with a philosophy that fit better into the world
 - 2. At the same time, the world that these Christians lived turned against them
 - a. The persecution that would inspire Book of Revelation was beginning
 - b. Beast and False Prophet were already making life difficult for the church
 - 3. The church needed to be reminded of its identity, of exactly who it was.
 - a. Church looked like a rag-tag lot by standards of world (**1 Cor 1:26**)
 - b. They appeared powerless, yet there was more to them than met the eye
 - 1) They were children of heavens, strangers in world but heaven-bound
 - 2) They had to remember their identity so they could live that identity

II. Children of God: Who We Are (Reading: **1 John 3:1-3**)

- A. John begins here, as John so often does, with the love of God
 - 1. In fact, there is something of an open-eyes marvel in this statement
 - a. NIV leaves untranslated John's first word, "*behold*" (KJV) or "*see*" (ESV)
 - "What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it: (MESSAGE)*
 - 1) John is an old man; he has been a follower of Christ for a long time
 - 2) Yet he is still amazed by God's love, mercy, goodness and grace
 - b. Are still moved by amazing gift of God (*song by Phillips, Craig & Dean*)
 - Your grace still amazes me. Your love is still a mystery.*
 - Each day I fall on my knees 'cause your grace still amazes me.*
 - 2. God's amazing gift is this—"that we should be called children of God!"
 - a. And we are not just **called** God's children; that is precisely what we are
 - b. King of universe, God of heaven-n-earth, the Maker of all—our Father
 - 1) That's not just some Ken Young ditty—we are children of heavens
 - 2) God calls us kids; Jesus isn't ashamed as sibling (**Heb 2:11**, NLT)
 - c. That is who we are—that is our true identity in Jesus Christ
 - 3. The world was not impressed with that—the world still isn't impressed
 - a. World not impressed with Jesus— it's not impressed with us (**Jn 15:21**)
 - b. But our hope is centered on that identity—we are children of the King!

- B. We can't live for God in the this world if we are clear on our identity
1. The Bible is very clear about that identity, and we have to clear as well!
 - a. We are children of God and siblings of Christ (**1 Jn 3:1, Heb 2:11**)
 - b. We are born of God and have been adopted by God (**1 Jn 4:7, Rom 8:15**)
 - c. We are the heirs of God and joint heir with Christ (**Rom 8:17**)
 - d. We are a chosen people and elected in Christ (**Col 3:12, 1 Peter 1:1**)
 - e. We are royal priests who follow true High Priest (**1 Pet 2:9, Heb 8:1**)
 - f. We are new creation who are crucified with Christ (**2 Cor 5:17, Gal 2:20**)
 - g. We are free from condemnation and alive w/ Christ (**Rom 8:1, Col 2:13**)
 - h. We are ministers of reconciliation & new covenant (**2 Co 5:18, 2 Co 3:6**)
 - i. We are the temple of God and His spiritual house (**2 Cor 3:16, 1 Pet 2:5**)
 - j. We share in heavenly calling and divine nature (**Heb 3:1, 2 Pet 1:4**)
 2. This isn't Sunday School stuff; this isn't pie in the sky—WHO WE ARE.
 - a. Do you believe that? Will you believe it at work or school tomorrow?
 - b. Why is it that we sometimes get so timid, so intimidated by the world.
 - 1) The world seems intimidating—it money, power, status, education.
 - 2) We are portrayed ignorant, judgmental, hypocritical (*try to confirm it*)
 - c. 1st century believers found it safer to blend in—reason for false teaching
 - d. We need to remember who we are and where the power is! (**2 Tim 1:7**)
- C. John is trying here to wake us up from our spiritual amnesia— our true identity
1. You are the children of the King; one day you will see him as He is.
 - a. Don't let the world and its standards blind you to truth... or to your hope
 - b. Story of early Notre Dame-USC game, before Notre Dame was a power
 - 1) Knute Rockne recruited all big brutes on campus to stand on sideline
 - 2) When USC came out, there were 200 knuckle-dragging hulks there
 - c. They were so intimidated by that, they lost to an inferior team
 2. The world looks intimidating—but it's all Satan's sham and shell game
 - a. We serve the one who has all the power—this world will fade away
 - b. Our Father rules over all things; our Christ has overcome (**Jn 16:33**)
 - c. Don't live someone else's life like Ciprian Skeid—remember who are!

III. Children of God: Who We Are to Be (Reading: [1 John 3:4-10](#))

- A. John's plea for us to "*remember who you are*" goes deeper than just a pep talk
 - 1. If we are the children of the heavens, then we will LIVE that way.
 - 2. John actually repeats his basic message here twice in these two paragraphs
 - a. Sin is lawlessness ([3:4](#)) and its origin is of the devil ([3:8](#))
 - b. Jesus came to take away sin ([3:5](#)) and destroy the works of the devil ([3:8](#))
 - c. No one in Christ keeps sinning ([6](#)), no one born of God keeps sinning ([9](#))
- B. The language here is striking, and perhaps more striking than it appears in NIV
 - 1. What [verse 6](#) says literally is, "*No one who abides in Him sins*" (NASB)
 - a. The verb here is present tense— no one who is in Christ sins in present
 - b. That raises a question about [1 John 1:8](#), "*If we claim to have no sin*"
 - c. But it also raises a question about our life. Do we sin? Are we in Christ?
 - 2. What John is suggesting is that real disciples don't accept sin as the norm
 - a. We continue to be human, and therefore we continue to make mistakes
 - 1) But disciples don't accept that as normal—we repent, change, go on
 - 2) Disciples won't, as did the false teachers, see sin as unimportant
 - b. NIV, ESV, NLT all see a continual present action—"*continues to sin*"
 - c. For true disciples, sinful acts are not the normal state of our lives.
 - 3. John: "*The reason Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work*" ([3:8](#))
 - a. Remember, the false teachers denied that Jesus really came in the flesh
 - b. The reason Jesus came was to destroy sin and its resulting separation
 - 1) Disciples cannot willfully continue in sin—defeats Christ's purpose
 - 2) To continue in sinful acts and relationships is to forget who we are!
- C. Charnley, *Skylark's Bargain*, tells of young skylark offered 2 worms for feather
 - 1. His father warned him, but all young bird saw was old man with the worms.
 - a. So day after day he made the trade, until it was time to fly south.
 - b. But the young skylark couldn't fly; he exchanged his wings for worms.
 - 2. This world offers us its delights—temptation wouldn't be if not delightful
 - 3. But to give into sin is to forget who we are and trade our wings for worms