

The Truth Will Make You Free

John 8:31-47

As most of you are aware, we are currently being bombarded in political rhetoric by many people who are seeking political office. Those that are victorious will exercise a great deal of power to determine the fate of our country as well as our individual lives. It is therefore imperative that we cast our vote for those candidates that will best represent what we value and govern in the best interests of the people. So how do we determine which candidates will do that? Do we listen to and make up our minds based on all the promises they make while campaigning? Based on what politicians have promised and then delivered on after election, we might find better odds in Las Vegas.

What then is the best way for us to determine whether we can believe them and what they will actually do if they are elected? I suggest to you that the best way to know a person's believability, integrity, honesty, and future performance is to gain as much information as we can of their past. Where did they come from? What is their family background? What about their schooling? What activities did they participate in while growing up? What kind of relationship do they have with God? What is their current relationship with their wife and children? What experience have they had that will prepare them for the position they are seeking? What is their political history? How have they voted on issues in the past? What organizations have they supported? Do they support the constitution?

Once we have answers to these and other questions we will be better able to understand how they might serve our nation. I encourage everyone to find out as much as they can about each candidates history.

Jesus was not running for political office, but He was carrying with Him the most important message that the world would ever hear. Some believed Him and many ignored Him. Others refused to even listen to Him because of their own false sense of pride. However, if these Jews would have given Jesus the same careful background check that would identify which politician could be trusted, they could not have rejected Jesus or His message. We have already determined that Jesus' character and background substantiate His claim that He was sent by God. Jesus possessed the following credentials:

- His miracles and acts of compassion verified His claims.
- His remarkable prophetic gift (see John 4:19, 29).
- His irrefutable teachings (see John 7:46; Matthew 22:46).

- His faultless character (John 8:29; see Acts 10:38).

But in spite of all these things that supported Jesus' statement that He was the One promised throughout the Old Testament to come from God, many refused to believe. As we continue now in John chapter 8, we will see Jesus continue in persistently trying to help the doubters believe so that they will not "die in their sins." You will recall that Jesus warned them in John 8:24 NLT: "*That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I Am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins.*" We will also see as well the exceptional power that Satan wields over the people of this world to prevent them from even listening to the message of salvation. It is a grave mistake to underestimate this formidable enemy. Mankind alone cannot prevent his controlling their lives. As we look in again on this scene we find Jesus speaking to those Jews that did believe what He was saying.

John 8:31-41 NAS

³¹ So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*
³² *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*"
³³ They answered Him, "*We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?*"
³⁴ Jesus answered them, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.*
³⁵ "*The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.*
³⁶ "*So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*
³⁷ "*I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.*
³⁸ "*I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.*"
³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "*Abraham is our father.*" Jesus said* to them, "*If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.*
⁴⁰ "*But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.*
⁴¹ "*You are doing the deeds of your father.*" They said to Him, "*We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.*"

Now let us take a closer look at this passage, starting with verse 31.

John 8:31-32 NAS:

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;

32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

What we have here is a statement by Jesus to those Jews who believed in Him that if they continue to listen to the message of the Gospel and put the principles learned into application in their lives, then they will know what is true and that truth will set them free from the slavery of sin and death. To be “free” in this context does not mean doing whatever one wants whenever one wants, but to live a disciplined and godly life being obedient to all that God has commanded us, which releases us from our bondage to sin so that the choices we make lead to what helps us rather than to what hurts us. All this can be found if we are only willing to really be disciples (followers) of Jesus.¹

We cannot “*know*” the kind of truth Jesus is speaking about here by just understanding the concept of it. We must also experience the reality of Jesus’ words by putting them into practice. You cannot really know truth if you only read about it or hear about it. You must put it to work in your life so that you can feel it.

Continuing in the teaching of Jesus is the proof of the pudding. It is one thing to claim to be a follower of Jesus, but the real proof is whether a person continues to study Jesus’ teaching and allows that knowledge to change his or her life so that they become more like Jesus. The freedom that Jesus is referring to here is the freedom from the slavery of sin by which every unbeliever is held captive.

Romans 8:1-2 NAS:

1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Freedom is freedom to be who God intended us to be. And the way to freedom is marked out by the words of Jesus Christ. Freedom will come only when we are set free from sin by allowing Christ’s Word to become part of us and make us more like Him.

When a person believes what Jesus teaches and begins living it, the Holy Spirit will come to reside in them giving them the power to resist sin. They are then no longer a slave to sin, as are unbelievers. Unbelievers have no choice but to sin. They remain captive to sin and will never be free of it without the cleansing that Jesus offers. You can deny it; you can ridicule it, you can call it intolerant; and you may hold any or all of these views until the day you die, but then instantaneously, in the blink of an eye, you will realize the terrible, eternal mistake you have made by rejecting the truth that could have set you free from your sin and an eternity in Hell. Please, I beg of you, do not let that happen. If you have not read the Bible, if you have not given the Word of God an opportunity to work in your life, please begin doing so today. And Betty and I are available to help you with any questions you might have. You may call us or contact us through our website.

Now let us move on to John 8:33 NAS:

¹ Richards, Larry; Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Teacher’s Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1987, S. 729.

*33 **They** answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?”*

“They” probably refers to the same unbelieving Jewish leaders who had opposed Jesus from the very beginning of John 8.² As before, they did not understand His message. Jesus was speaking about true spiritual freedom, freedom from sin, but they were thinking about political freedom. Their claim that Abraham’s descendants had never been in bondage was certainly a false one that was refuted by the historical records in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews had been enslaved by seven mighty nations, as recorded in the Book of Judges. The ten Northern tribes had been carried away captive by Assyria, and the two Southern tribes had gone into seventy years of captivity in Babylon. And at the very time they were making this claim, the Jews were under the control of the Roman Empire. How difficult it is for proud religious people to admit both their failings and their needs.³

John 8:34-36 NAS:

34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

35 “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

36 “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Because the person who sins is not obeying Jesus’ words, that person has no contact with spiritual reality. Like the Pharisees, he or she may think all is well. But in fact that person is lost, separated from God, and doomed unless he or she turns to Christ for salvation. The person who chooses sin is bound by invisible chains.⁴

Since no one is exempt from sinning, everyone must be a slave to sin. This applies to those of Abrahamic descent as well (Jews). There is an obvious contrast between a slave and a son in the rights that each possesses (verse 35), and this emphasizes the difference between bondage and freedom. The words *you will be free indeed* (verse 36) show that true freedom can come only through the Son.⁵

Jesus explained that the difference between spiritual freedom and bondage is a matter of whether one is a son or a servant. The servant may live in the house, but he is not a part of the family; and he cannot be guaranteed a future. Whoever prefers to continue in sin is a servant of sin and cannot become part of the family of God. These religious leaders would not only die in their sins (John 8:21, 24), but they would live the rest of their lives as slaves to sin. They had no choice but to sin. They were slaves to their master, “*sin*,” and they had to obey their master. They had no choice; sinning was what their master

² John 8:13, 19, 22, 25.

³ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 8:31.

⁴ Richards, Larry: *The Bible Reader's Companion*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991, S. 685.

⁵ Carson, D. A.: *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, S. Jn 8:31

commanded them to do. Unless they could break free from their master, “*sin*,” they would continue as slaves to it.

How can slaves of sin be set free? Only by the **Son of God** and through the power of His Word, and Jesus had already told them, “*The truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). Jesus told His disciples at another time that He was the Truth (John 14:6). Jesus is the Truth that can set people free from sin.

But these leaders would not listen to that truth. Perhaps they were so attached to their master, “*sin*,” that they did not want to leave him, but wanted to remain loyal to him because they enjoyed so much living under his control. Are there people who love being under the control of sin? Yes, and they are all around us just as they were all around Jesus in His day.

Jesus is the true **Son** and seed of Abraham according to Galatians 3:16 NAS: “*God gave the promises to Abraham and **his child**. And notice that the Scripture **doesn’t say** ‘to his children,’ as if it meant many descendants. Rather, it says ‘to his child’—and that, of course, means **Christ**.*” Jesus remains in the house and is over it as we see in Hebrews 3:6 NAS: “*But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God’s entire house. And we are God’s house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ.*”

Slaves of sin can become truly **free** by becoming sons of God by faith in Christ, *the Son*.

In Galatians 3:26 NAS, Paul writes: “*For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*” So according to verse 35, the slave does not remain in the house forever but the son does.

Therefore God provides the opportunity for the slaves of sin to become sons of God and remain in the house forever. How extraordinary!

John 8:37-39 NAS:

37 “*I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.*”

38 “*I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from your father.*”

39 They answered and said to Him, “*Abraham is our father.*” Jesus said to them, “*If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham.*”

In these verses you can see the debate centering around the word *father*. Jesus identified Himself with the Father in Heaven, but He identified them with Satan, the father from Hell. The Jews claimed Abraham as their father. In Luke 3:8 NAS, Luke records the words of John the Baptist to the Jews that came to him for baptism: “*Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God. Don’t just say to each*

other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones."

But Jesus made a careful distinction between "Abraham's seed," Abraham's physical descendants and "Abraham's children," his spiritual descendants because of their personal faith. Listen to what Paul told the Galatians in Galatians 3:1-9, 14 NAS:

¹ *Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.*

² *Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ.*

³ *How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?*

⁴ *Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it?*

⁵ *I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.*

⁶ *In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."*

⁷ *The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God.*

⁸ *What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."*

⁹ *So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.*

¹⁴ *Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.*

These Jewish leaders, who claimed to be Abraham's descendants, were very unlike Abraham. In John 8:40 Jesus says:

"But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. (NAS)

To begin with they wanted to kill Jesus; Abraham would have never wanted to do such a thing. Abraham was the "friend of God" according to Isaiah 41:8. Abraham listened to God's truth and obeyed it, but these religious leaders rejected the truth. One's basic

nature and behavior patterns are largely determined genetically by birth and also by the environment in which one grows up with their parents. If God is your Father, then you share God's nature and behavior. But if Satan is your father, then you share in his nature and behavioral patterns.

Jesus said that the Pharisees and other counterfeit believers were the children of the devil. That is exactly what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15 NAS:

¹³ *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.*

¹⁴ *No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

¹⁵ *Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.*

Even in the Church today, Satan will work through pastors and other church leaders who claim to be devoted to Jesus. Satan gives his children a false righteousness that will never get them into Heaven.

Romans 10:1–4 NLT:

¹ *Dear brothers and sisters, the longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of Israel to be saved.*

² *I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal.*

³ *For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God by trying to keep the law.*

⁴ *For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.*

Now can we identify some of the characteristics of these unbelieving religious leaders, which might suggest a family resemblance? For one thing, they rejected the truth (John 8:40) and tried to kill Jesus because He spoke the truth. They did not love God (John 8:42) nor could they understand what Jesus taught (John 8:43, 47). Satan's children may be well versed in their religious traditions and rituals, but they have no understanding of the Word of God.⁶

Satan is a liar and a murderer. He lied to Adam and Eve and engineered their deaths. Cain was a child of the devil (1 John 3:12), for he was both a liar and a murderer. He killed his brother Abel and then lied about it (Genesis 4). Is it any wonder that these religious leaders lied about Jesus, hired false witnesses, and then had Him killed?⁷

The worst bondage is the kind that the prisoner himself does not recognize. He thinks he

⁶ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 8:31.

⁷ Ibid.

is free, yet he is really a slave. The Pharisees and other religious leaders thought that they were free, but they were actually enslaved in terrible spiritual bondage to sin and Satan. They would not face the truth, and yet it was the truth alone that could set them free.⁸ Salvation is a spiritual experience, and human birth has nothing to do with it.⁹

John 8:41 NAS:

41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

These Jewish leaders insist on the purity of their descent: "*children of Abraham*" was equivalent in Jewish literature to "*children of God*" (Exodus 4:22), because they had come to believe that God had adopted them as Abraham's descendants guaranteeing their salvation. You see they believed that because they were born into a Jewish family that automatically guaranteed their salvation. Whereas the reality was that everyone individually must be saved by faith just as Abraham was. No one received a free pass based on his or her nationality.

They pleaded that they were Abraham's sons (descendants). In this way they intended to give themselves prestige and special honor. They had forgotten their true history and the many times the nation had turned to idolatry and dishonored God by doing shameful things, and yet God continued to rescue them from one catastrophe after another.

How typical of those who are attempting to cover up the shame of the past to boast about what their ancestors were like and what they accomplished and how that must somehow make them special, when the truth is that their ancestors were wallowing in despair just as they are in the present day. Again the true test is not to talk about what you or your ancestors have done, but to show the evidence of what you or they have done.

John 8:42-47 NAS:

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.

44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wiersbe, Warren W.: Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1997, c1992, S. 233

Not even these Jewish leaders would argue against the fact that Satan was the original murderer (John 8:37, 40) as well as the original liar. He was the one who led mankind to lie and to murder. Jewish tradition stressed that his lie had led to Adam's death (Genesis 3). Because these Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus and reject His truth, their behavior demonstrates similar personality and behavioral characteristics to their real father.

Jesus' position is right on target: If they were Abraham's children, such children of Abraham as could claim an interest in the covenant God made with him and his seed, then they would do the kind of things Abraham did. God would perform what He had promised for Abraham's descendants who kept the way of the Lord as Abraham did.

Genesis 18:19 NAS:

19 "For I have chosen him (meaning Abraham),¹⁰ so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him."

Only those who walked in faith as Abraham did would inherit the promise. How obvious it must have been that Jesus was the Son. We have already established His credentials and how honest He was. It is simply our choice. Do we want to believe in the truth or do we want to reject the truth. Have you believed in Jesus as the Truth that can set you free from sin and start you on a new path, a path full of life and hope? We have a Savior who gave us all we need to believe. Unlike the politicians we considered earlier, Jesus has a record of impeccable honesty. He was sent with a message from God for our best interests. Let us rejoice for those who receive it and may we pray for those who do not.

¹⁰ Parentheses added.