

## **Find Life in the Son: Slaves or Free John 8:31-47**

### **Introduction**

**31** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **33** They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never 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 practices sin is a slave to sin. **35** The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **37** I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. **38** I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

**39** They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, **40** but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. **41** You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even

God.” <sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. <sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. <sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? <sup>47</sup> Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

1. True Disciples of Jesus Continue in His Word (31-33).
2. The Son Sets Sin-Slaves Free (34-38).
3. Children of God or of the Devil Show Who They Are (39-47).

### **1. True Disciples of Jesus Continue in His Word (31-33).**

<sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

For some weeks now we have been in John 7 and 8. Remember that these chapters record the teaching of Jesus from the mid-point of the Feast of Tabernacles to the end of the week-long festival. He is teaching in the treasury area of the temple precincts, where the most number of people would be present. His audience is a mixed multitude, including sincere worshipers, men and women, friends who hang on His teaching and enemies who want to arrest Him and kill Him.

If we don't remember the range of people in front of Him, the following verses are going to be confusing to us. Some try to explain how those who believed in Jesus can be of their father the devil by noting that John has already revealed that some belief is only superficial.

John 2:23-25

<sup>23</sup> Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

<sup>24</sup> But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people

<sup>25</sup> and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

John 3 records that Nicodemus was different. He came seeking Jesus to learn more. Later in John we learn that Nicodemus has trusted

Jesus and comes with Joseph of Arimathea to take care of Jesus' body after the crucifixion.

Were there superficial believers in the crowd during this John 8 discourse? Certainly. But even superficial believers, whether those who would eventually turn away or those who would press on like Nicodemus to full reliance on Jesus, could not at this time be desiring to kill Him, yet John reveals that some in the crowd want to do so. That has been the case for at least a year (John 5).

With such a mixed multitude, what will set the true disciples apart from superficial believers and murderous enemies?

*Every time the people of God gather to hear the Word of God, there is a mixed multitude. Wheat and tares together. Those who truly believe and those who do not. Those whose faith is temporary and superficial, and those who are fully relying on Jesus. Those who treasure His words, and those who reject them. Those who love Him and those who hate Him. That variety is here on any given Sunday.*

So what sets the true disciples of Jesus apart from the rest?

John 8:31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples."

To abide is to remain, to continue. True disciples of Jesus continue in His word. They persevere in what He has taught. False disciples fall away from His word.

Matthew 13:20-21

**20** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

Hebrews 3:12-14

**12** Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. **13** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **14** For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

1 John 2:24-27

**24** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. **26** I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **27** But the

anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Common trend: rather than holding fast to the words of Christ, professing believers who are struggling with doubt start paying attention to other voices rather than to Jesus' words. They spend less and less time in the Scriptures. In time, they abandon God's Word altogether and fill their minds with lies.

*Look, you cannot survive this world of lies and deception if you don't keep yourself immersed in the truth Jesus taught. If you stop listening to Him, you will lose your bearings and your faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."*

So if you really are struggling, don't let go of the words of Jesus. Keep filling your mind with His teaching and that of His apostles. If you stop listening to Him, and all you listen to is other voices, how can you say are struggling to maintain your faith? You're not struggling. You're giving up. Truly born-again people can't do that for long. The Holy Spirit who indwells them won't let them.

From Eden onward, we have been tempted and seduced to listen to teaching that contradicts the Word of God. True disciples hold on to what Jesus teaches over against all substitutes no matter who is teaching otherwise.

1 Timothy 6:3-4a

<sup>3</sup> If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, <sup>4a</sup> he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

2 John 1:9

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Acts 20:29-30

<sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Illustration: Andy Stanley

He defended his church's recent unconditional conference as an effort to minister to families whose children suffered with same-sex attraction and who ended up pursuing a homosexual lifestyle. It is true that we should

seek to help such families, along with those practicing homosexuality. But Stanley chose persons practicing homosexuality in a same-sex marriage to teach the church how to minister. He argued that those with same-sex attraction had prayed for God to remove their desires so that they could align themselves with the biblical design of one man, one woman in marriage. But God did not answer their prayers. They tried to live a celibate lifestyle, but it was unsustainable. That is why they entered into a homosexual marriage. Stanley argued that the church needs to welcome such people, which he revealed his church has done for years now. He declared that he rejects the version of Christianity that looks only to the Scriptures and to prayer. People like that are driving people away from Christianity unnecessarily. Instead, he argued, we need to listen to and learn from brothers and sisters practicing homosexuality. Because Jesus draws circles not lines. And that is what we need to do, too.

Jesus isn't drawing circles in our text this morning. He's drawing lines. Slave, free. Children of the devil, children of God. And what distinguishes the two is what you do with God's Word and what you do with sin. The gospel of Jesus is for sinners—it casts a wide circle. But it does not leave us there. It calls us to repent from sin and to trust His Word. It offers us hope because Jesus has the

power to make us free indeed. Truth not lies. No longer slaves to sin. Stanley has rejected the only gospel there is. He has ditched the clear words of Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6, Jude, the Sermon on the Mount, and Hebrews. His version of Christianity does not match up to the Word because it's not Christianity. Stanley's gospel is this: "If you can't stop sinning, if it's just too hard, then go ahead and give in. No need to turn from it. Jesus accepts you as you are and leaves you as you are. And we will affirm you and include you in our church family."

Stanley's gospel is no gospel. It's a lie. It affirms unrepentant sinning (whatever sin it may be—adultery, stealing, greed, lying, etc) as a Christian way to live, and it attacks genuine, Biblical Christianity as falsehood. That's the way Satan talks. He accuses the brothers and belittles the truth. Satan is the father of lies: "Has God said? he began with Eve. Then he denied God's word with the claim "you shall not surely die. God knows that if you disobey Him you will find fulfillment. Preachers who talk like Satan they are the devil's children, not God's. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. There is only one gospel. If even an angel from heaven comes with a different gospel, let him be accursed. That's what the apostle Paul says in Galatians.

*All substitutes for Jesus' word, however popular they may be, lead people into deception and slavery. They have no divine power to save. They deceive and destroy instead. It's not loving to peddle such lies. It's just the opposite.*

John 8:32

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

When you pay attention to what Jesus teaches, you tap into reality. You experience the absolute truth of God. You become convinced of it, and it has powerful effect on your life. The Holy Spirit of God takes the word of God and empowers you for holy living. We experience this effect of the good news in this life. It is the God-empowered process of sanctification. We become more and more like Jesus.

Those who capitulate to sin and turn from what the Word clearly teaches have adopted a strategy that enslaves and destroys people rather than setting them free.

Some in the crowd that day didn't get what Jesus was saying.

John 8:33

They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to

anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

Any Jews in the crowd could have said something like this, but in the following verses it becomes clear that those intent on murdering Jesus were making this claim.

The Jews had suffered many seasons of bondage during their history: Egyptians, the Philistines and others during the Judges period, Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and now Rome. But what these Jews are more likely referring to is the spiritual bondage of idolatry. Ever since they returned from the Babylonian captivity, they had been free from slavery to idols. They were descendants of Abraham and worshipers of the true and living God.

*It's easy to find our spiritual safety in our religious heritage rather than in our true relationship to God.* It was common in the first century for Jews to think their ancestral connection to Abraham the father of the faith made them secure. Same as people today who grew up in church or went to a Christian school. It is not uncommon for people, especially religious people, to think they are free when they are not.

## **Applications**

- In what ways are you continuing in the word of Christ?
- What false versions of the gospel do you need to guard your heart from?
- What are some false reasons today that can make people feel they belong to God?

## **2. The Son Sets Sin-Slaves Free (34-38).**

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. <sup>37</sup> I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. <sup>38</sup> I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Jesus cuts to the core issue. If you practice sin, you are a slave of sin. Slaves have no permanent home in the Father's house, only those connected to the Son. Only Jesus the Son of God can set you free from sin. If you reject His word, you cannot be free from your sin. You cannot be right with God because God the Son and God the Father are in perfect harmony. Jesus was teaching and doing everything in line with His Father. And these Jews who desired to kill him were doing everything in line with their father, as well. Not Abraham, but Satan himself.

There is a tight connection between being set free from sin and trusting in the words of Jesus. The opposite is also true. There is a tight connection between rejecting the word of Jesus and remaining a slave to your sin. Only Jesus can set you free, so if you reject Him, you are powerless to gain your freedom.

The reason these enemies of Jesus wanted to kill Him was because they refused His word. They refused truth. They refused reality. They could not even hear it. Their sinful hearts enflamed their desire to murder and marked them as foreign to the family of God and slaves to sin. Their blood connection to Abraham, and even their inherited religious practices from Abraham could not rescue them from bondage to sin and Satan. Do not think your family heritage will save you, nor your church affiliation. You must have Jesus. You must trust the truth He delivers.

### **Applications**

- How does your lifestyle reveal that Jesus has set you free from slavery of sin?
- In what ways do you show that Christ's words have found a place in your heart?

### **3. Children of God or of the Devil Show Who They Are (39-47).**

**39** They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, **40** but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. **41** You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God."

Abraham was declared righteous before God because he believed God. His subsequent deeds demonstrated his faith in God. The true spiritual children of Abraham also believe God. And they show their trust in Him by their actions.

God the Father was speaking through God the Son, Jesus Christ, but these enemies of Jesus refused to believe Him. That was not like Abraham at all. Rather than believing Jesus, they hated Him and wanted to silence Him by murdering Him. Their sinful response to Jesus exposed their true spiritual identity. They are not spiritual descendants of Abraham, nor are they children of God.

"We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God."  
Some see this as casting aspersion on Christ's birth, but these men seem to be focused on the spiritual not the physical here. Idolatry is

called spiritual adultery in the OT, and the OT also refers to God as the father of His chosen people, especially in contexts of judgment on their sin and their need to be restored.

Deuteronomy 32:6

Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

Isaiah 63:16b

You, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

But God is clearly not the father of these men, or they would love Jesus, whom the Father sent. And they would listen gladly to His word, because His word is truth.

John 8:42-47

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. <sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do

your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. <sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? <sup>47</sup> Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

The devil specializes in murder and lies. He lied to Eve and murdered the human race when Adam and Eve yielded to his temptation to reject God's command and seek fulfillment their own way. Children of the devil prefer lies to truth, and they pursue harming others rather than benefiting others.

These religious leaders, despite all their Bible knowledge and their religious standards, hated the truth and specialized in lies. They hated Jesus, and desired to murder Him. Their devotion to lies and murder marked them as children of the devil, not of God. Their heart-level desires were precisely in line with Satan's desires. Their character, the same as his.

Jesus spoke only truth. Jesus did only what was righteous. No sin whatsoever. Anyone who rejects Jesus, therefore, prefers lies over

truth, and sin over righteousness. Anyone who is of God, one of His children, desires truth and receives it, loves righteousness and practices it.

1 John 3:8-10

<sup>8</sup> Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup> No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. <sup>10</sup> By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

### **Applications**

- How are you living out your commitment to the truth of God?
- What lies are you tempted to believe?
- In what ways do your thoughts, words, and actions show beneficial love instead of malicious hatred?

### **Conclusion**

1. True Disciples of Jesus Continue in His Word (31-33).
2. The Son Sets Slaves to Sin Free (34-38).
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## **Applications Summary**

- In what ways are you continuing in the word of Christ?
- What false versions of the gospel do you need to guard your heart from?
- What are some false reasons today that can make people feel they belong to God?
- How does your lifestyle reveal that Jesus has set you free from slavery of sin?
- In what ways do you show that Christ's words have found a place in your heart?
- How are you living out your commitment to the truth of God?
- What lies are you tempted to believe?
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