

February 8, 2015  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: John  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from John 8:48-59.

1. Why was it such an insult for the Jews to say that Jesus was a Samaritan?
2. What does it mean to “keep” Jesus’ words (v.51)?
3. How does the Father glorify the Son?
4. What day did Abraham rejoice to see, and how do we know he did?
5. What is significant about Jesus telling the Jews that “before Abraham was, I am”?

### **EVIDENCE THAT SIN OPPOSES TRUTH-TELLERS** **John 8:48-59**

You live in a day when the term “hate speech” has become part of everyday vocabulary. Twenty years ago, we would have only guessed what a person referred to when he accused someone of using hate speech. Today everyone should know what it is because it is possible to find yourself the target of litigation and/or stiff penalties if you are guilty of the crime. So what is it?

From the debate of this topic in the American Bar Association we learn that “hate speech is speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other traits.” The question is whether this

kind of speech should be discouraged. The answer is easy according to the lawyers of the land—of course it should! The problem that arises in discouraging such speech is how to develop policies that limit hurtful speech without also limiting the constitutional rights of the speaker. I hope they get it figured out.

Step out of the attorneys’ arena at the American Bar Association and into the arena of real life that is governed by public policy and they tyrant named political correctness. Here you will discover that “hate speech” is not defined by such squeaky clean clinical definitions. Hate speech, as it is defined by the media and their politicians, is any kind of speech that conflicts with modern progressivism. Therefore, if you speak truth that happens to conflict with their world view, you are guilty of hate speech. If you publicly declare a truth that exposes any of their pet issues as erroneous, fanciful, or even unrighteous, they will accuse you of hate speech.

In this scenario, a major problem has become obvious and looms large. Everyone is expected to embrace the views and policies of the liberal politicians, media, and culture-shapers. If we do not, we are guilty of hate speech. You are expected to tolerate their views quietly. If you disagree, you are branded hateful, backward, and intolerant. Worse is the possibility that you might defend your conclusion with the teaching of the Holy Bible. Try that in public and the wolves of political correctness will descend mercilessly on you with fangs bared.

Take heart my friend, you are in good company. The prophets of Old Testament times dared to speak, “This is what God says” to rulers who preferred the dishonest view of Satan. They were maligned, lied about, persecuted, tortured and killed. John the Baptist came along and uncovered the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Finally King Herod cut off his head at a birthday party. Jesus picked up after John and continued to speak the words His Father in heaven told Him to speak. The same religious fanatics were furious. They ridiculed Him, maligned Him, and finally killed Him. His disciples continued the work of telling the truth of the Bible which exposed people who loved sin. Wherever those men went telling the good news, sinners hated them, virtually accused them of hate speech, and killed them. And the long golden line of truth-tellers continues with you and me.

No one illustrates the conflict between truth and haters of truth better than Jesus. The last few verses of chapter eight bring the conflict to an apex. For a few days Jesus has been uncovering the error and sin of the very religious Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles. He has presented Himself as the Teacher who taught with God's authority (7:16), the Healer who healed with God's power (7:22-24), the Doer of God's will until He returns to heaven (7:33-34), the Satisfier of spiritual thirst (7:37-38), the Light of the World (8:12-18), the Son of Man who they would crucify (8:28-29), the Speaker of truth (8:38-47)—and the people argued with Him.

Finally the argument reached a fevered pitch where the people accused Jesus of having a demon, and they picked up stones to stone Him. He walked away and hid Himself. The picture should cause us to wonder about our peers. What will life be like for them after they have rejected truth so long that they no longer hear it? What will life be like when they no longer hear what they call "hate speech" but can only hear lies? The subsequent story of the Jews in Jerusalem in A.D. 70 indicates that such a life is not a pretty picture at all.

#### **God Desires His Son's Glory (vv.48-50).**

We should be taken aback to read that mere men accused God the Son of having a demon. *The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"* (v.48). They said this in response to Jesus' revelation that they cannot hear the truth (v.47). Jesus told them truth and they refused to believe it (v.45). Jesus pointed out that they could not hear the truth because they were not God's children (v.47).

Put that conversation in our modern context and we can be pretty sure that statements like that are going to be considered hate speech. Many people would conclude that Jesus must have hated the Jews and that is why He said they were not God's children. Or is it entirely possible that Jesus told the truth? When some of these same people, or at least people like them, shouted for the crucifixion of God the Son six months later, they rather proved Jesus' accusation that they were not God's children. Jesus told them that they were children of the devil. All of us are of that family by nature. Therefore the Jews naturally responded like their father the devil. They lied

about Jesus. They slandered Jesus. They engaged in real hate speech toward Jesus, which kind of speech is always opposed to truth.

This story illustrates how sin drives people to horrible conclusions about God. They insisted that they were correct to conclude that Jesus was a Samaritan (v.48a). This was like pulling some kind of "race" card. They accused Jesus of being bi-racial or, worse, of being a half-breed. Samaritans were people from a lineage that was half Jewish and half Gentile. Their Jewish ancestors had inter-married with pagan Gentiles who the king of Assyria planted in Israel after he destroyed the nation whose capital was Samaria. To call Jesus a Samaritan was intended to be a hurtful, painful insult. The term also accused Jesus of being a traitor to Israel, a false teacher, a law breaker, and an enemy of God.

As though the accusation that Jesus was a Samaritan was not bad enough, the people went further and accused Jesus of having a demon (v.48b). To accuse God the Son of being possessed by one of Satan's fallen angels is the worst blasphemy imaginable. Or, didn't Jesus teach that blasphemy of the Spirit is the worst kind of blasphemy? Jesus taught that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:31). To blaspheme the Holy Spirit of God is to attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Okay, let's apply that truth here. Anyone who insists that Jesus did not do the work of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit can never be born again. Their sins will never be forgiven because they refuse to allow Jesus Christ to be their Savior. Such is the plight of the person who does not acknowledge that Jesus, the man from Nazareth, was affirmed as Savior by God the Holy Spirit. They will never be forgiven.

This grievous sin of the Jews accusing Him of being demon-possessed was not just a sign of ignorance. This was evidence of the creature's determined rebellion against the Creator. The only righteous response to Jesus' revelation of their true condition (that they could not hear God's truth) was repentance of the sin that made them deaf to truth. They could not repent because that would be to acknowledge that Jesus was right, that He was speaking the truth. That would have been too humiliating. Therefore, they resorted again to an *ad hominem* fallacy. They attempted to denigrate the person who told them the truth.

I am not even going to illustrate or make application of this principle because we see it in our culture daily. All of us can think of dozens of examples just like this in our daily lives.

Jesus countered that He didn't need to defend Himself (vv.49-50). He could refrain from a self-defense because He was on the right side of the "honor" issue. What is that? *Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me" (v.49).* Jesus could have responded in like manner as those who were attacking Him. He could have justly exposed all of His accuser's secret sins. It would not have been an *ad hominem* fallacy but the stark truth. Jesus could have told the simple truth about each of those people, and it would have laid them low in embarrassment among themselves.

But because God the Son is incredibly longsuffering, He took the high road. Years after this event Peter wrote about Jesus, *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23).* He simply stated the reality that He did not have a demon. For Him to be possessed by a demon would have demonstrated hideous dishonor of His heavenly Father. God the Father sent God the Son to do His will, and being possessed by a demon was certainly not God's will. He honored God who the opponents claimed was their only spiritual father (v.41). By dishonoring Jesus (accusing Him of being demon possessed), the people dishonored the God they claimed to serve. So then we are caused to wonder who was under the influence of demons at this point?

Because Jesus willingly withheld vengeance but chose to honor the Father, the Eternal Judge would take care of Him. Jesus explained, *Yet I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks it, and He is the judge (v.50).* God the Son chose not to respond to unfair treatment by seeking His own glory. The human thing to do when under such attack is to defend ourselves. Jesus was God the Son, a member of the Trinity, who came to earth to save sinners from the sin these critics were enslaved to (like each of us are). He could have chastened those critics on the spot with a lesson about His glory they would never forget.

God the Son chose to rest in the Father's care. In reciprocal glory, the Father determined that He would be glorified through the Son. Just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed, *"Father, glorify Your name."* Then a voice came from heaven: *"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (John 12:28).* When He had gone out, Jesus said, *"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him" (John 13:31).* Therefore, God the Father was arranging all the circumstances of the Son's human experience to bring about the Son's glory.

Oh, and by the way, He who uses even the wickedness of people to glorify Himself is also the eternal judge. That thought alone should have sobered up the sinners very quickly. But they didn't get it.

There is a good lesson for us in this picture. We who follow Jesus Christ, we who claim we want to be like our Savior need to learn from the example He left us. Think back to the statement Peter made about Jesus not retaliating when wicked sinners maligned Him. The words that preceded that statement are *For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:19-21).* The natural desire is to defend ourselves. The natural desire is to fight back. The natural desire is a tooth for a tooth. The Christlike thing is to commit ourselves to the Eternal Judge who will give recompense to all for eternity.

### **God Glorifies His Son (vv.51-54).**

An underlying problem that precipitated the conflict at the Feast was the basic principle that unbelievers cannot accept Christ's glory (vv.51-53). For God the Son to be the sinners' Savior is the glory of Christ. He put it like this, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death" (v.51).*

Let's stop and review so that we can follow the argument up to this point. If the people would live according to what Jesus taught,

they would know the truth and they would finally experience genuine spiritual freedom (v.32). Instead of knowing the truth, they were slaves to sin and wanted to kill the “Truth-teller” (vv.34-36). Because they were slaves to sin, they could not bear to listen to the truth Jesus told them (vv.42-43). They could not endure the truth because Satan was their spiritual father (vv.44-46). They could not believe the truth Jesus told because Satan was their father (vv.46-47). Because they rejected the truth, they rejected Jesus claiming that He was demon-possessed (vv.48-50).

Against that immediate background imagine Jesus now saying, “*If you keep My word you will never die!*” We can hear the Jews respond in disbelief, “What?” That claim was not going to make things better! No it wouldn’t, but it’s true. This is the root of the conflict. God the Son took on humanity for the express reason to offer salvation from sin. All of His teaching, His “telling the truth” was to show the need and the way to salvation. To offer eternal life is the whole purpose of His ministry. In this Gospel account, John affirmed that this was Jesus’ ministry. He introduced Jesus by writing, *In him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:4)*. He went on, *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12)*. Jesus affirmed the same truth. *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life (John 6:63)*.

The Jews proved that unbelievers are astonished at any explanation of Christ’s glory. *The Jews said to him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste death’ (v.52). Are You greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do You make yourself out to be?” (v.53)*. They understood that everyone in the history of Israel—even the most righteous people—died. Does Jesus think He is more important than “our father” Abraham?

Being rooted in Abraham was so important to these people. It is as one person said, “The man who boasts only of his roots is conceding that he belongs to a family that is better dead than alive.” The people who loved Abraham (or so they claimed) wondered how this man from Nazareth claimed that people who believed Him and lived according to what He taught would experience death? Indeed,

we who are reasonable people know many fine Christian folks who have died. What did Jesus mean? He meant the same thing He told Martha when Lazarus had died. *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)*. The second a person who follows Jesus dies physically, he or she steps into eternal life where there is no death.

Who can back up that kind of a pie-in-the-sky promise? That’s what the Jews wanted to know. *Who do You make yourself out to be?” (v.53)*. Jesus has actually answered that question several times in this long discussion and He will answer it again shortly. He taught over and over, “I am!” He said, I am the Living Water (4:26), I am the Living Bread (6:35), I am the Light of the world (8:12), I am from above (8:23). He even said, “I am He” which meant He was equal to the Father (8:28). But most important we will see at the end of this text that Jesus simply said, “I am!” The Jews knew that Jesus just claimed to be one with the Great God (8:58).

The lesson was clear, still is clear. But who Jesus thought He was is not the point (v.54). The important fact is that, though He is God, He did not attempt to bring glory to Himself. *Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, My glory is nothing” (v.54a)*. If Jesus was to exalt Himself by arguing about how great He really is, then it really isn’t glory. We hold to this principle in human relations all the time. We say things like, “The fellow who brags about how smart he is wouldn’t if he was.” Or “Too many people are like boats . . . they toot their own horns loudest when they are in a fog.” Self-aggrandizing is no aggrandizing.

Besides, God the Son is not going to glorify Himself when He had already laid aside His glory when He left heaven. Being equal with God in creation and sovereign control, we cannot even imagine what the Son laid aside to become one of us. The mind-boggling miracles He did on earth are a meager illustration of what He could do in all His glory. But He withheld that display. Let’s not forget that He took up His glory when He returned to the Father.

Therefore, the God most people claim to know glorifies the Son. *“It is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’” (v.54b)*. The people who argued with and rejected Jesus did

not hesitate to claim that the Heavenly Father was their God. They had been taught to believe it. Almost everyone in the world acknowledges a god of some kind who they claim is the true God equal to the God described in the Bible. Most false religions claim to be teaching about our God—he or it just goes by a different name. Does that fanciful god of theirs glorify Jesus Christ?

The God of the Bible exalts, lifts up, magnifies the man named Jesus. He calls Him His beloved Son with Whom He is very happy. He tells people to hear Him. He exalted Him for eternity by giving Him grace to endure the torture of the cross as He paid the penalty for our sins. Paul explained, *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).*

### **Unbelievers Refuse to Glorify God's Son (vv.55-59).**

The issue underlying Christ's glory is truth. Christ is faithful to God's Word (vv.55-56). In fact, He cannot speak untruth. *But you have not known Him. I know Him. If I were to say that I do not know Him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and I keep His word (v.55).* Many people talk profusely about the God they have never come to know. The wording here means that they have never experienced a relationship with God their Creator. They cannot experience a relationship with Him because their unconfessed sins make them God's enemies. They can only come to know Him as they embrace the work and person of Jesus Christ by faith.

Conversely, Jesus of Nazareth knew God the Creator better than any human or angel ever could. To deny His personal relationship with God the Father would make Him a liar, like the people who were arguing with Him. Therefore, because Jesus knows the Father, He keeps His word. This is the most telling litmus test. People who are

having a relationship with God endeavor to keep His word—the Bible. People who are content to keep God at a distance, like an escape hatch, are often familiar with God's Word, but they are not interested in keeping it. They try to reinterpret the Bible to mean that they don't have to be in conflict with their world because they love God. They erroneously conclude that it is possible to love Jesus and follow Him while not being associated with the shame of His cross. Jesus showed us what a life lived in conformity to God's Word looks like.

In spite of what the arguing Jews concluded, Abraham was glad Christ is faithful. Jesus put the onus on the critics when He said, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see My day. He saw it and was glad" (v.56).* Probably this is a reference to Abraham's statement that God Himself would provide the lamb for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:8). That confident statement was an indication that God had revealed the plan of redemption through the final sacrifice to His friend Abraham. Probably the Jews would have been satisfied with Jesus' lesson if He would have left it at "Abraham rejoiced to know about Messiah's work of redemption." But Jesus pointedly claimed it was "My day!" Abraham foresaw the work of Jesus Christ and rejoiced! Those were fighting words to the Jews.

Those Jews proved that day that unbelievers hate what they think is hate speech (vv.57-59). They hate because they do not know. *So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" (v.57).* Mere humans argue from human experience because they don't have any other platform from which to argue. They assumed Jesus was like them, a peer, and, therefore, it would have been humanly impossible for Him to have seen Abraham. They were right if Jesus was only another human. So much of this long argument uncovers for us the error of false religions that require Jesus to be human—not God.

More than that, they hate because they think they know. Jesus plainly stated that He was equal with God. *Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (v.58).* Again this is a bold and open claim of equality with God. False religions ignore this and reinterpret it. The Jews could not ignore it because they counted it blasphemy.

In response, the unbelievers cut off opportunity to hear more truth. *So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple (v.59)*. Because the people rejected the truth that Jesus had told them over and over, they were determined to kill Him. And in response to their indication of hatred, Jesus hid from the very people who needed Him most.

The story reminds us that all of us are like the unbelieving Jews from our birth. We are all born in sin and need the Savior who pays our penalty. If we refuse to believe what Jesus taught regarding Himself, we rob Him of rightful glory and rob ourselves of eternal hope. Therefore, we need to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as our Savior from sin now or we will not find Him on that day of judgment when we need Him.