

John 8 and the Gospel – Part 2

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John 8:30-32. These are well-known vs. Fifty years ago, when I was attending Iowa State Univ., I saw this phrase written on the top of the campus library, "*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free*", and everyone could read it, but most people didn't know what it really meant. Now the key word in these vs. is the word truth. Throughout history, there's been a great deal of discussion and debate among people as to what truth really is. And people have wanted to find the truth, truth they hope will enable them to live rational and productive lives, and help mankind live in peace.

Back in the 1700's, there was a new era that started, and it was called the Age of Reason or the Age of the Enlightenment. And it centered on man's reason, man's wisdom, man's ideas of the truth. And for the most part, God was left out of the picture. Philosophers, leaders, modernists as they're now called, wanted to discover truth that was absolute and authoritative, truth that related to science, government, religion, and all walks of life. And they came up with their definitions of truth, their philosophy of life. Then you come to the 1800 and 1900's, and you have all these wars and the two big ones, WWI and WWII. And this "*truth*" from the Age of Reason wasn't working out so well.

Now we're in the postmodern era. The foundations for this era started in the early 1900's, but the outward affect wasn't really seen until the 1960's. This is when people were saying, "*God is dead*", and you couldn't pray in school, and church attendance started declining. Postmodernists say there's no absolute truth, that all is relative, that you have situational ethics, that truth depends on the situation you're in, the culture you're in, and that truth can change over time. And the only thing you can know for certain is that nothing is certain. - A lot of people like postmodernism, for then you're free to do whatever you want, for there's no absolute truth that tells you what you can or cannot do. (Judges 21:25). Many of these people call themselves pragmatists, that you do whatever works, that the ends justify the means. And many of these people call themselves libertarians, which means you can do what you want as long as it doesn't hurt anyone. Rom 1:24, 26, 28; 1 Cor 1:19-20; Col 2:8

Both modernists and postmodernists believe in this truth that eliminates God from the picture, that eliminates morality and promotes immorality, that lets them do what they feel like doing. People like this don't believe in absolute truths. As Christians, we know there are absolutes, truths that don't change over time, truths that Abraham believed and applied to his life, and that we need to believe and apply to our lives as well. That is, God's truth never changes. There's the truth of creation, the truth that God made us in our mother's womb, that we're made in His image, that there are men and women, and that marriage is between a man and woman. There's the truth of sin, of heaven, of hell, and that salvation is through Jesus Christ.

Now some people would say Christians are intolerant, for we believe in the Bible, and we don't tolerate other people's views, truths, and ways of living. But as Christians, we know there are absolute truths, and we must live by these truths, but we also need to be patient, to be compassionate, to be gentle, and speak the truth in love. 2 Tim. 2:24-26 - John 8:30-32. And so many Jews came to believe in Jesus. But were they all truly saved? Did they all have eternal life? Jesus then talks to these Jews who said they had believed. And he explains what it means to be a true believer, to be a real disciple, and it has to do with the truth, that is, the truth of God's word.

And God wants us to know that not all people who say they're saved, who say they're believers, or who go to a church, are saved.

- Mark 4 talks about the word falling on rocky soil. This refers to those who hear the word and receive it but then fall away when there's persecution, which means they weren't truly saved.
- John 6:60-66 talks about people who called themselves disciples of Jesus, but they didn't really believe and so they stopped following Him, which means they weren't true disciples.
- James 2:17 – *“Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”* A person can say he has faith, that he believes in Jesus, but if there are no works, if there is no fruit, then he's not saved, he's not a true believer, he's not a true disciple.” 1 John 2:19

John 8:31. This doesn't mean that a condition for salvation, that the means of salvation is being in God's word, but that continuing in God's word is a sign, is evidence of a true disciple, a true believer, a true Christian. John 15:7-8; Psalm 1:2, 119:97

- A true Christian doesn't just know the word, he loves and obeys the word. John 14:15, 1 Jn. 2:4-5, Jms. 1:21-22, 1 Pet. 2:2 - *“Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word.”* Now if a person says he is a Christian but does not love and obey God's word, then you have good reason to believe that he is not really saved.

Now a person who is a disciple is a learner, and in this context, is one who learns from Jesus and holds to and hangs on to His teaching. And therefore, he's a follower of Jesus. He sees Jesus as His Savior, but also as His Lord. He not only knows what Jesus, His Lord, says, but He also does what Jesus, His Lord says. Matt. 12:46-50

- John 8:31-32. The person who continues in the truth knows the truth. And this truth is from God's word. And God's word is filled with truth that God wants us to know and believe and apply to our lives. Now it's the Holy Spirit who teaches a person the truth; we sure can't learn it on our own. John 14:17, John 15:26, John 16:13.

As we learn the truth, it becomes the basis for our new way of thinking, our new way of talking and living. The truth changes and replaces our old way of thinking, the lies that are in our mind and heart. Rom. 12:1-2. As God's word changes and transforms our mind, then we're able to do God's will, we're able to think and talk and live the way God wants us to.

Psalm 119:30-32. This tells us how to get God's truth to be part of our life. Vs. 30 says we need to choose the truth, and we need to choose the truth over lies, and there are a lot of lies out there in the world, and a lot of lies are straight from the devil. John 8:44 - Let's say you're tempted to believe the lie that God isn't good to you, that He's bad. You need to choose to believe the truth in God's word. You need to decide to believe the truth of Ps. 100:5 which says, "*The Lord is good,*" over the lie of the devil. 1 Jn. 2:14 - What about love? You need to choose the truth that God loves you. Psalm 136

Vs. 31 says you need to cling to God's testimonies, to His word, to the truth. That is, you need to keep believing the truth that God is good, that God is loving. And as you cling, as you hold on to these truths about God's goodness or love, or any other truth for that matter, then that truth becomes part of your thinking, it's hardwired into your mind and soul, and you don't ever doubt God's goodness or love for you.

Vs. 32 says you will run the way of God's commandments. The person who chooses God's truth and hangs on to it is growing as a Christian, is becoming spiritually mature. And in these areas of God's goodness and love, you know they're true, and you have solid convictions, and you're even telling others about God's goodness and love. 1 John 2:14. And it's by God's Spirit and grace, that you can choose the truth, cling to the truth, and be running the race for Christ, then be living by the truth.

John 8:32. This relates to what we just talked about. If you know the truth in your head, and in your heart and soul, then you'll be free from sin, free from the world, and free from the devil. You will be a spiritually mature Christian, a grown-up Christian. You will be free from worry, fear, and doubt, free from impurity, guilt, and condemnation, free from jealousy, slander, bitterness, or discouragement, and everything else you can think of that is bad, that's wrong, that's sinful.

John 17:17. How can we be free from sin, and live a holy life? It's by God's word. It's by the truth, which is what we find in God's word. You see, our thinking has to be word-based thinking, and not world-based or fleshly-based thinking. This happens as we meditate on the truth, for then it affects and transforms our thinking, and becomes our thinking, and then we'll continue in the truth, and then we'll be godly and fruitful Christians. Rom. 12:1-2, Ps. 119:9-16

John 8:33-36. Jesus was talking about being free, and the Jews thought they were free – they didn't see themselves as slaves of anyone or anything. But they were thinking from an ethnic and religious perspective. *"Hey, we're Jews, that's our race. Hey, we're in the Jewish religion."* But we're not saved, not righteous because we're in a certain religion or church, or in a certain race or ethnicity. And so these Jews thought they were free, but they didn't realize they weren't free, but in fact, were slaves to sin. Rom. 2:28-29

John 8:34. Here again is this phrase, *"truly, truly,"* which means that what Jesus says is of great importance. And Jesus is saying they're slaves to sin, and are not free. And when you are a slave, then you're controlled by someone or something else. Let's say a person is addicted to something, let's say it's alcohol - that means he is a slave to alcohol, for the alcohol controls him, the alcohol is his master.

And Jesus is saying is that a person who sins, a person who's a sinner, is enslaved to sin. The sin is his master. It can be a love of money, a love of sports, a love of video games. It can be that he is enslaved to pleasure, to food, to TV, to movies, or to fear or worry. Now most sinners don't realize they're slaves to sin, that it controls them. And the Jews who were talking to Jesus didn't know it either. They were deceived and thought they were on the right track and headed to heaven, when in fact, they were headed to hell.

John 8:35. The son in this analogy has been set free from sin, has been saved from sin, and is born again, and has eternal life, and is a permanent member of God's household. But the slave has not been set free from his sins and isn't a member of God's household. Jesus was saying that a person can think he's saved, can think he's righteous - but only those who are sons, only those who've been set free from their sins are truly free.

John 8:36. It's by the Son, by Christ that we're set free. And the Son can set us free because He died on the cross and paid for our sins, and when we truly believe in Him, then we're declared not guilty, are righteous, are completely holy in God's sight. Now vs. 32 says the truth sets you free. John 14:6. And so Jesus is the truth, and the embodiment of truth, and when Jesus dies for us, then we're set free from sins, and are not slaves of sin, but in fact, are slaves of God. And a person is either a slave to sin, or a slave to God, it's just one or the other. Rom. 6

John 8:37. This relates to the previous point, and it says we're either children of God or children of the devil. And this is another important truth that people must understand. And we will talk more about this next time.