

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 8.31-47



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 8.31-47
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Introduction to *John 8.31-47*

Jesus promises light, living water, freedom, and the knowledge of God the Father. Many heard Him say such things, but few believed. And even the few who believed, didn't *really* know Jesus or the Father.

Jesus becomes even more controversial when He tells the people that not only are they *not* free, and *not* children of Abraham, they are the children of the devil, the father of lies. They insisted they were Abraham's children, but Jesus made it clear that, in fact, they were not – not his true, spiritual children, at any rate.

Jesus insists that those who are of God will hear His Word and believe Him. Those who do not are not of God the Father, but of the father of lies, the devil. *Not* to believe in Jesus is to believe the *lie*. And living a lie is a form of slavery, not freedom.

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T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 You Shall Be Free

Read and meditate on John 8.31-33.

We're about to get a lesson in what it means to *believe* in Jesus.

³¹Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide in and receive My Word, you are My followers, indeed.

³²And you shall know the truth, and will be freed by it." ³³They answered, "We are Abraham's seed, and we have never been in bondage! Freed? From what? How can You say this?"

- John 8.31-33

Reflect

1. We recall (v. 30) that many of the Jews who were at the Feast of Tabernacles, as they listened to the exchanges between Jesus and the Pharisees, "believed in Him." It's just like Jesus to make sure they understood what they were doing. Between "believed Him" and "My disciples indeed" is a crucial bridge. How would you explain this? Complete this prayer: *As Your disciple, Lord, I want to abide in Your Word. That is, I want...*
2. According to the first part of verse 32, what is the result of abiding in the Word of Jesus? Explain *know* as Jesus used it here. *Lord, I know that I know the truth when...*
3. From what does the truth we abide in set us free? *To* what? How does that happen? *Today, Lord, please set me free from...*
4. Jesus' use of the future tense ("shall make you free") suggests that this is not a one-time event but an ongoing process. We are *made* free, but we *shall be made* free. Explain. *Today, Lord, make me free to...*
5. Looking at verse 33, we might say these "believers" either had a poor memory, or they were willfully blind. On what basis do they object to Jesus? Does that cut any ice with Jesus? Had Abraham's descendants *ever* been slaves before? More than once? Even in Jesus' day? How had their slavery ended during the Old Testament? How would they be free from slavery, according to Jesus? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"But the Lord did not say, 'You shall be free,' but 'The truth shall make you free.' However, that word [free]—because, as I have said, it is clearly so in the Greek—they understood as pointing only to freedom. They puffed themselves up as Abraham's seed and said, 'We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to anyone: how is it that you say, "You shall be free"?' O inflated skin! This is not magnanimity; it is hot air! For even if you want to talk about freedom in this life, how were you truthful when you said, 'We were never in bondage to anyone'? Wasn't Joseph sold? Weren't the holy prophets led into captivity? And again, didn't that very nation, when making bricks in Egypt, also serve hard rulers, not only in gold and silver but also in clay? If you were never in bondage to anyone, ungrateful people, why is it that God is continually reminding you that he delivered you from the house of bondage? Or do you perhaps mean that your ancestors were in bondage, but you who speak were never in bondage to anyone? How then were you now paying tribute to the Romans, out of which also you formed a trap for the truth himself, as if to ensnare him?" *Augustine (354-430*

AD)

Obviously, these “believers” didn’t quite understand what Jesus required of those who believed in Him. Do you? Explain.

Closing Prayer

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.

Psalm 51.6-13

Psalm 51.4-9 (*Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head Now Wounded*)
Against You only, Savior, have I become unclean;
Thus just the condemnation which You pronounce on me.
Lord, I was born to sinning, while You seek truth within;
To wisdom my heart winning, release me from my sin!

In Jesus’ blood and mercy, Lord, cleanse my evil heart!
Let me washed, cleansed, renewed be, and pure in whole and part.
Bring joy again and gladness; look not upon my sin.
Deliver me from sadness; renew me yet again!

2 Free Indeed

Read and meditate on John 8.34-36.

Jesus did not explain what He meant by being *free*, except by contrasting it with slavery to sin. Remember: Jesus knows all people. He knows when anyone is enslaved to anything, and He knows that those who are enslaved to *anything* would prefer to be *free*.

³⁴He explained,
"I tell you, anyone who sins remains
a slave of sin. ³⁵No slave abides within
the house forever, but a son dwells in
the house. ³⁶So if the Son shall make you free,
you shall be free indeed."

- John 8.34-36

Reflect

1. What does it mean to be a "slave to sin"? How does truth set us free from this? Complete this prayer: *Lord, search me: If You find that I am a slave to any sin, please...*

2. Jesus contrasted "free indeed" with "slave of sin." How would you explain "free indeed" to someone with whom you were sharing the Gospel? How have you experienced "free indeed"? *Lord, I cherish the freedom I have in You. Keep me from...*

3. Jesus contrasted "slave" with "son" in verse 35. What seems to be the point of this comparison? What place did "dwelling in the house" have in the religion of the Jews (cf. Pss. 15, 23)? *Lord, who may dwell in Your presence? And how? And with what expectations? Today, Lord, let me dwell with You continuously, so that...*

4. How does the Son of God make us "free indeed" and transform us from being "slaves" with no place in the house to "sons" who dwell in the house of the Lord forever? How did you come to be free indeed? *Thank You, Lord, that You have set me free, so that I...*

5. Jesus continues to provoke those who hear Him. He seems to be making it *harder* to be a disciple rather than *easier*. Explain. What's the lesson here for us? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

"The power to set free belongs to none other than the one who is the Son by nature—one who is truly free and unconstrained by any bondage. Because he is wisdom and light and power by nature, he makes those who are ignorant wise. He enlightens those in darkness, and he strengthens those who are weak. Therefore, because he is God of God and the genuine and free fruit of the essence that reigns over all, he bestows freedom on whomever he wants to. For no one can become truly free at the hands of one who does not possess freedom by nature. But, when the Son himself wills to free anyone, infusing his own good [into them], they are called free indeed. They receive dignity from the one who possesses authority and not from any of those who have borrowed it from another or those who have been ennobled, as it were, with a grace that was not theirs to begin with." *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

Free indeed means slaves to sin no more, and children enjoying the pleasures of the house and presence of God. If you are free indeed, give thanks to the Son, Who set you free, and tell someone today about your freedom and what it means to you.

Closing Prayer

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable.
One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works.
Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts,
And I will declare Your greatness.
They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness,
And shall sing of Your righteousness.
The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.
The LORD *is* good to all,
And His tender mercies *are* over all His works.
All Your works shall praise You, O LORD,
And Your saints shall bless You.
They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And talk of Your power,
To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

Psalm 145.1-12

Psalm 145.1-12 (*Brother James' Air: The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*)

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

To ev'ry generation we Your wondrous works shall tell.
The splendor of Your majesty we contemplate full well.
We speak of all Your mighty deeds and all Your greatness tell!

Then shall we all the glorious fame of Your great goodness sing –
Your righteousness, Your gracious Name, Your mercy: praise we bring!
Your steadfast love remains the same, mercy our covering.

Your works shall thank You; all Your saints shall bless and praise You, Lord.
Your reign we bless without restraint; Your power fills our words.
Our children we shall educate in all Your splendor, Lord.

3 Descended from Abraham?

Read and meditate on John 8.37-40.

Abraham, Shmabraham – they were still slaves to sin, just like a lot of Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and anyone else who thinks he can be saved by *identity*, rather than by the *Son of God*.

³⁷You claim to be from Abraham descended, yet you seek to kill Me, just because the words I speak have no place in your soul. ³⁸I speak what I have with My Father seen, and do not lie; you do whatever you have seen with your own father.” ³⁹They replied, “As we before have said, our father’s name is Abraham.” But Jesus said, “If you of Abraham were children, you would do his works. ⁴⁰But you intend to kill Me, since I told the truth which I have heard from God. But Abraham did not do such as this.”

- John 8.37-40

Reflect

1. What did Jesus identify as the mark of a true descendant of Abraham (v. 39)? Look at Romans 4.13-16 as you contemplate your answer. Complete this prayer: *Lord, today help me to do the works of Abraham by...*
2. What is suggested about the *power* of the Word of Jesus in verse 37 (cf. Heb. 4.12)? Do you experience that power? In what ways? *Lord, let the power of Your mighty Word be at work in me today to...*
3. Let’s just remind ourselves that these folks who are quibbling with Jesus here are said to “believe in Him.” They “believe in Him,” but they object to His assessment of their true motives (vv. 37-39). Evidently, it’s possible for someone to say he *believes* in Jesus, yet to disagree sharply with Jesus’ words. How can that be? *Lord, is this the case with me in any way? Am I holding off abiding in Your Word, so that I can continue living by my own? Help me to know, Lord, if...*
4. “Abraham is our father,” these “believers” insisted. What were they saying by this? How was Jesus using the word *children* in verse 39? *Thank You, Lord, for making me a child of our heavenly Father. Today, let me live in such a way as that...*
5. Jesus insisted that the father of these “believers” was someone other than Abraham. This was clear because they were not doing the works of Abraham, but were seeking to kill Jesus. Hold on: These people *believed* in Him! And they were seeking to *kill* Him? What are the implications of this for such “believers” today? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

“But the Lord wishes God the Father to be understood when he says, ‘I speak that which I have seen with my Father.’ I have seen the truth; I speak the truth because I am the truth. For if the Lord speaks the truth that he has seen with the Father, he has seen himself—he speaks himself because he himself is the truth of the Father, which he saw with the Father. For he is the Word—the Word that was with God.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Jesus connected faith *professed* with *works* of faith, undertaken in obedience toward God, and with a view to gaining His promises – like Abraham. Merely professing faith in Jesus is not true faith. What is?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.
Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!

Psalm 34.1-8

Psalm 34.1-9, 3 (*Alleluia [Lowe]: Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I sought the Lord, He answered, and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.
‘Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide.
None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e’er confide.
Magnify the Name of Jesus!
Let us lift His Name in praise!

4 Hearing, but Not

Read and meditate on John 8.41-43.

These “believers” were *bearing* Jesus speak – and they liked *some* of what they heard – but they clearly were not *understanding* His words. They were not *able* to understand, because they were paying more attention to a voice other than that of Jesus.

*⁴¹They said to Him,
“We are not born of fornication! We
have but one Father – God!” ⁴²To them then He
replied, “If God your Father were, then you
would love Me, for I came from Him to do
His work. I came not of Myself; but He
has sent Me to you. ⁴³How then can it be
that you do not yet understand My word?
You listen to Me, but you have not heard
Me.”*

- John 8.41-43

Reflect

1. Now the “believers” get snotty: “We were not born of fornication...” What were they implying? What does this reveal about the true nature of their “belief”? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief, so that today...*
2. Jesus does not respond in kind – like you or I might. Rather, He presses His point, because He knows that only the *truth* will set these people *free* from their slavery to their real father. It’s clear to Jesus that these people did not *love* Him (v. 42). How was that clear? *I love You, Lord, so let me show You by...*
3. Should we connect loving Jesus (v. 42) with abiding in His Word (v. 31)? Explain. *I love Your Word, Lord, because...*
4. Again, Jesus explains that He is a Man on a mission from God the Father. This, He insisted, should be reason enough to love Him. Instead, they’re arguing with Him and resisting His Word. Why? Are these people *really* believers? Explain. *Help me to hear Your Word, Father, every day, and to see Jesus there, and to...*
5. Listen, hear, understand, abide, love: Put those four words into a single sentence to define *faith*. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“The sending of Christ is his incarnation. But the proceeding forth of the Word from God is an eternal procession.... From him, then the Son proceeded forth as God, the equal, the only Son, the Word of the Father. And he came to us, for the Word was made flesh that he might dwell among us. His coming indicates his humanity. His staying indicates his divinity. It is his Godhead toward which we make progress, and it is by his humanity that we are able to make that progress.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Being a disciple and a true follower of Jesus involves much more than merely professing to believe in Him. And this is an *ongoing* commitment, rather than a one-time event. How would you explain to an unbeliever what it means to believe in Jesus?

Closing Prayer

And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.
Yes, they spoke against God:
They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?"
Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,
Because they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation.

Psalm 78.18-22

Psalm 78.8-37 (*Foundation: How Firm a Foundation*)

Our fathers were stubborn; they would not obey;
When faced with their foes, they in fear turned away.
God's work of redemption they wholly despised,
Forgetting the pow'r He had shown to their eyes.

Cast back to the desert, they sinned ever more,
And tested the Lord by their greed o'er and o'er.
And though He provided them manna and meat,
His anger flared up, and His wrath was complete.

When troubled, they turned to the Lord's loving face,
He met them and showed them His marvelous grace.
They spoke of their love for Him, yet in their heart
Of His holy cov'nant they wanted no part.

5 Lying Father

Read and meditate on John 8.44.

As if Jesus hasn't irritated these people enough! He has challenged their claim to believe in Him, insisted they are not Abraham's children, and denied that they have heard His message or love Him. Now He explains why all these things are so. Can you hear their teeth gnashing?

⁴⁴For your father is the devil, and you do what he desires. He does not stand in truth, but is a murderer, and has been from the start, because in him there was no truth. He speaks, and when he does, he lies. He is a liar. Liars all despise the truth, and he is father of all lies.

- John 8.44

Reflect

1. In what sense was the devil the "father" of these "believers"? How could Jesus tell who their father was? Complete the following prayer: *Lord, let not my words or deeds betray You; instead...*
2. Meditate on Romans 1.18-25. If Jesus and His words are the *truth*, what is the *lie*? Is the lie still operative in our world today? Explain. *Keep me, Lord, from desiring the ways of the lie. Let me always...*
3. Do those who are trapped in the lie readily recognize this, or agree that it is so? Does that change the *fact*? Explain. *People desire to do the works of the lie, Father. You have sent me to them with the truth, so help me to...*
4. Jesus said that whenever the devil – or one of his children – speaks, it is a lie. Does this mean that unbelievers can *never* speak some truth? Or get something right? How do they manage that (cf. Matt. 5.45)? *Thank You, Lord, that You show grace even to those who don't know You or deny You. Help me to love them, too, by...*
5. Jesus shows us that the devil is real, that his power is real, that his power works against the truth and against people hearing, understanding, believing, and abiding in the Word of Jesus. How can we defend ourselves against such power? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"If we do the works of God and wish to do his desires, we are children of God. But if we do the works of the devil and wish to do what he desires, we are of our father the devil. Let us pay attention, then, not only to what we do but also to what we desire. For even to wish to do the desires of the devil is sufficient to be his child. Perhaps this is why the words "You wish to do the desires of your father" are added after the statement 'You do the works of your father,' so that we may learn that even if we merely wish to do what the devil desires, we will still be called the children of the devil." *Origen (fl. 200-254 AD)*

If we will not hear, understand, believe, and abide in Jesus' Word, we will attend to the lies of the devil. What are the implications of this for your daily walk with and work for the Lord?

Closing Prayer

Truly God *is* good to Israel,
To such as are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;
My steps had nearly slipped.

For I *was* envious of the boastful,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
For *there are* no pangs in their death,
But their strength *is* firm.
They *are* not in trouble as *other* men,
Nor are they plagued like *other* men.
Therefore pride serves as their necklace;
Violence covers them *like* a garment.
Their eyes bulge with abundance;
They have more than heart could wish.
They scoff and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression;
They speak loftily.
They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walks through the earth.
Therefore his people return here,
And waters of a full *cup* are drained by them.
And they say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?"
Behold, these *are* the ungodly,
Who are always at ease;
They increase *in* riches.
Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.
For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.
If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

Psalm 73.1-15

Psalm 73.1-15 (*Ellacombe: Hosanna, Loud Hosanna*)

To us our God is only good, to all the pure in heart!
But as for me, I nearly stood in sin from Him apart.
I nearly stumbled, nearly slipped as I the proud observed,
How they with ease and riches dripped, while I, impoverished, served.

The wicked know in death no pain; with fat their bodies surge.
The plagues and trials of other men their ease do not disturb.
In fury, wrath, and pride they dwell; their minds run where they will.
Their tongues of sin and mocking tell; with earth their mouths they fill.

They never change but fill their soul with earth's abundant charms,
And laugh to think that God might know or do them any harm.
For thus do they themselves appease with riches and good health;
The wicked ever dwell in ease, in pleasure and in wealth.

"Surely in vain have I kept pure my heart, or cleansed my hands!
What troubles daily I endure while thus with God I stand!"
But had I spoken thus I would Your children have betrayed.
When this at last I understood, my troubled soul obeyed.

6 Not of God

Read and meditate on John 8.45-47.

They couldn't really find anything wrong with Jesus; they just didn't want to believe His words. Worse than that, they were *unable* to believe Him, because they were not of God.

⁴⁵“I tell the truth; you do not realize this, nor believe in Me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts Me of wrongdoing? If I do no wrong, and tell the truth, why do you not believe in Me? ⁴⁷Whoever is from God will hear God's words. The reason you do not is that you listen, but are not of God.”

- John 8.45-47

Reflect

1. Jesus said it was *because* He told the truth that they did not believe in Him (v. 45). Do people *not* want to know the truth? Why not? Should that affect our determination to *tell* the truth? Explain. Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, the world needs to hear truth, and You have sent me to proclaim it. Today...*
2. Jesus flatly said of those who “believed in Him” that they “do not believe” Him. Explain. How can we avoid falling into this category of “believers”? *I believe, Lord, and I want to believe and obey more consistently. Teach me to look to You always and to...*
3. It was important that Jesus know, and that these people know, that there was no sin in Him (v. 46). Why? *It's important for me, too, Lord, so help me today to...*
4. Verse 47 can be read both as cause and effect, and as evidence and conclusion. Explain. *Let the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart, and the works I do today, Lord, be...*
5. What hope is there for those who do not hear God's Word and do not believe in Jesus? What is our role in that hope? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“Let each one of you then consider within himself if this voice of God prevails in the ears of his heart. Then he will recognize whether he is now of God. There are some who do not choose to hear God's commands even with their bodily ears. There are others who do this but do not embrace them with their heart's desire. There are still others who receive God's words readily, yes, and are touched, even to tears. But afterwards they go back to their sins again and therefore cannot be said to hear the word of God, because they neglect to practice it.” *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

Reflect on Gregory's comment. How can we keep from going back to our sinful ways, so that we abide in the Word of Christ and grow in the freedom we have in Him?

Closing Prayer

The LORD reigns;
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad!
Clouds and darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice *are* the foundation of His throne.

A fire goes before Him,
And burns up His enemies round about.
His lightnings light the world;
The earth sees and trembles.
The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples see His glory.
Let all be put to shame who serve carved images,
Who boast of idols.
Worship Him, all *you* gods.
Zion hears and is glad,
And the daughters of Judah rejoice
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.
For You, LORD, *are* most high above all the earth;
You are exalted far above all gods.
You who love the LORD, hate evil!
He preserves the souls of His saints;
He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.

Psalm 97.1-10

Psalm 97.1, 6, 9-12 (*Darwall: Rejoice, the Lord is King!*)

Rejoice, the Lord is King! O earth, lift up your voice;
Be glad, you islands, shout and sing: Rejoice! Rejoice!
Beyond, above all gods and nations be exalted, God of love!

The heav'ns above declare His glorious righteousness;
And tribes and peoples everywhere His Name confess.
Beyond, above all gods and nations be exalted, God of love!

All you who love the Lord, despise sin's wicked ways!
Praise Him Who guides us by His Word through all our days.
Beyond, above all gods and nations be exalted, God of love!

7 Who's Your Daddy?

Read and meditate on John 8.31-47.

It all comes down to this: Who's your daddy?

³¹Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide in and receive My Word, you are My followers, indeed. ³²And you shall know the truth, and will be freed by it." ³³They answered, "We are Abraham's seed, and we have never been in bondage! Freed? From what? How can You say this?" ³⁴He explained, "I tell you, anyone who sins remains a slave of sin. ³⁵No slave abides within the house forever, but a son dwells in the house. ³⁶So if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. ³⁷You claim to be from Abraham descended, yet you seek to kill Me, just because the words I speak have no place in your soul. ³⁸I speak what I have with My Father seen, and do not lie; you do whatever you have seen with your own father." ³⁹They replied, "As we before have said, our father's name is Abraham." But Jesus said, "If you of Abraham were children, you would do his works. ⁴⁰But you intend to kill Me, since I told the truth which I have heard from God. But Abraham did not do such as this." ⁴¹They said to Him, "We are not born of fornication! We have but one Father – God!" ⁴²To them then He replied, "If God your Father were, then you would love Me, for I came from Him to do His work. I came not of Myself; but He has sent Me to you. ⁴³How then can it be that you do not yet understand My word? You listen to Me, but you have not heard Me. ⁴⁴For your father is the devil, and you do what he desires. He does not stand in truth, but is a murderer, and has been from the start, because in him there was no truth. He speaks, and when he does, he lies. He is a liar. Liars all despise the truth, and he is father of all lies. ⁴⁵I tell the truth; you do not realize this, nor believe in Me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts Me of wrongdoing? If I do no wrong, and tell the truth, why do you not believe in Me? ⁴⁷Whoever is from God will hear God's words. The reason you do not is that you listen, but are not of God."

- John 8.31-47

Reflect

1. In our passage, Jesus establishes a clear contrast between two kinds of people. Summarize that concept from vv. 31-47. Complete this prayer: *Lord, let it always be clear of me that I am one who...*

2. It's also clear from this passage that there is an important difference between believing in Jesus and believing His Word. How would you explain that difference? *Help me to encourage all believers, Lord, to...*

3. The devil is the father of many people, and they are all trapped in the lie. But Jesus can give us the authority to become sons and daughters of God (Jn. 1.12), so that we have a new Father, live in freedom from sin, and know the truth that is in Christ Jesus. Why is this Good News? *Thank You, Lord, for the Good News that has changed my life, so that...*

4. The message of life and light and freedom in Jesus Christ can be *confrontational*. What do we mean by this? Is there risk involved in this? Is the risk greater than the need to bring truth to those who are trapped in the lie? Explain. *Lord, I know You have entrusted me with Your truth. Give me grace each day so that...*

5. We will either abide in Jesus, His Word, and the freedom from sin we have in Him; or we will abide in the lies of the devil – whatever we may trust in besides Jesus, and our best ideas about what's good for us. Does this ever cease to be true? How can we make sure we're on the side of God as Father, rather than the devil as our father? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

“We must question how he says, to people who believe in him, ‘because I speak the truth, you do not believe in me.’ Consider whether it is possible to believe in someone in one particular aspect but not to believe in another aspect. For instance, one could believe that Jesus was crucified in Judea in the time of Pontius Pilate but not believe that he was born of the Virgin Mary. This one believes and disbelieves in the same person. Take, as another example, those who believe in the Jesus who performed the recorded wonders and signs in Judea but who do not believe in the Son of the one who made heaven and earth. These believe and disbelieve in the same one...It is likely that they believed in him on the basis of what was seen because of his marvelous deeds, but they did not believe in his deeper sayings.... You see this even in the present, that there are many people who marvel at Jesus whenever they consider the story about him but who no longer believe when a teaching that is deeper and greater than their capacity is disclosed to them, but instead suspect it to be false.”
Origen (f. 200-254 AD)

From what we've seen in this passage, what blessings accrue to those who know God as their Father?

Closing Prayer

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
For He has done marvelous things;
His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.
The LORD has made known His salvation;
His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.
Sing to the Lord with the harp,
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,
With trumpets and the sound of a horn;

Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell in it;
Let the rivers clap *their* hands;
Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,
For He is coming to judge the earth.
With righteousness He shall judge the world,
And the peoples with equity.

Psalm 98.1-9

Psalm 98.1-9 (*Duke Street: Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*)

Come, let us sing unto the Lord new songs of praise with one accord!
Wonderful things our God has done: Jesus has our salvation won!

Now is God's saving mercy known; His glory to the world is shown.
Faithful and kind is God our Lord; earth has the Name of Jesus heard.

Raise to the Lord your loudest voice! Break forth and sing! Rejoice! Rejoice
Praise, praise to You our God and King, with all our hearts and strength we bring!

Now let the whole creation 'round burst into song with joyous sound!
Jesus will come to judge the earth; let all proclaim His matchless worth!

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Describe the nature of the freedom they may know who believe in Jesus and abide in His Word.
2. What kinds of beliefs, experiences, or fears keep people from believing in Jesus today? Is it important that we be aware of these? Why?
3. Telling people they are under the power of the devil may strike us as not very practical or effective. But is it true? And if it's true, do we not need to find *some* way of exposing people's ultimate loyalties? Explain.
4. How can one both believe in Jesus and not believe in Him? How can this problem be overcome?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 7.31-47? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

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Thank you.