

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 8.48-59



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 8.48-59
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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
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Introduction to *John 8.48-59*

Jesus' disputation with the religious leaders at the Feast of Tabernacles concludes, but only after He has raised the stakes by His claims. The religious leaders tried to brand Him as a social outcast, a demonic, and a heretic. Jesus took it all in stride and, rather than defend Himself against these slurs, simply added more claims to those He'd already made.

That only infuriated His adversaries more.

Jesus shows us a patient, confident witness in this situation. We can learn from Him both how to improve our own witness for the Lord, and how to maintain a gracious but truthful demeanor when people become upset, angry, or worse.

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

1 Ad Hominem

Read and meditate on John 8.48.

Name-calling and attempts to slander Him didn't faze Jesus in the least.

⁴⁸The Jews then answered, "Is it not the truth that You are a Samaritan, uncouth and rude, and that You have a demon?"

- John 8.48

Reflect

1. Exasperated, irritated people resort to slander and name-calling, as we see here. What does this suggest about what was going on in the hearts of these religious leaders? Why were they so upset? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I know You have said that in this world we can expect trouble and opposition. I know that, but...*

2. Let's remember that Jesus was having a conversation with the religious leaders, in the temple, and with a lot of other people standing around and listening. Unable to dislodge Jesus' logic, or to deny His good works, the religious leaders resorted to this *ad hominem* form of argumentation, in which you attack the character of your opponent. What did they hope to achieve by this? What forms does this kind of argument take in our day? *Give me boldness and grace, Lord, so that if anyone wants to call names or make slanderous claims, I can...*

3. This slur has two prongs. To have any credibility at all, the slur must have some basis in fact, at least as those see who it who employ it. That Jesus was a Samaritan is not so much a racial slur as a social one. Would the Jews have thought they had some basis for such a claim? How did they want to position Jesus by saying this? What would be an equivalent slur against Christians today? Would those who make such a slur think they had some basis? Explain. *Lord, do not let me give anyone a basis for slandering the Gospel. Help me at all times to...*

4. The second prong of this slur was spiritual: Jesus was demon-possessed. What form might such a slur take against Christians today? What basis did the Jews have for making this claim and hoping it might stick? *I know, Lord, that many people think Christians are naïve, simple-minded, or just plain crazy. Today, I'd like to provide evidence against such claims by...*

5. These Jewish slanders were the words of men desperate to retain their status among their peers (cf. Jn. 11.47, 48). Some people today feel their status is challenged by the Gospel, and so they too resort to *ad hominem* attacks. Should this surprise us? How should we respond? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"Where there was need to instruct them, to pull down their excessive insolence, to teach them not to be proud because of Abraham—at these times he was vehement. But when it was necessary that he should bear insults he was extremely gentle.... And so he teaches us to avenge insults offered to God but to overlook those that are directed at ourselves." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

We can surmise two things from this slander: The religious leaders were getting angry, and they were becoming desperate to silence Jesus. We need to stand firm for the truth, like Jesus did, and calmly make our case for the Gospel. How well prepared are you to do this? Explain.

Closing Prayer

Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
“Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.”
He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
“Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion.”

Psalm 2.1-6

Psalm 2.1-6 (*Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

Why do the nations vainly rage, conspiring together from age to age?
Earth's kings and all of their counselors stand against the Lord and His Right Hand:

“Now let us cast His yoke below, His Kingdom authority overthrow!
Throw off His Law, reject His Word; no more be governed by this Lord!”

The Lord in heaven laughs in wrath at all who embark on this cursed path.
His angry Word to them is plain: “Yet shall My King in Zion reign!”

2 Once More, for Emphasis

Read and meditate on John 8.49-51.

Rather than cringe at their scurrilous, vicious slur, Jesus replied with grace and truth. Same song, next verse.

⁴⁹He

replied, “I do not have a demon. Me you would dishonor by thus saying; I My Father honor, ⁵⁰for I do not My own glory seek, but His, the One Who seeks and judges. ⁵¹Most assuredly, I speak these words to you: whoever keeps My Word shall never die.”

- John 8.49-51

Reflect

1. Why do you suppose Jesus did not reply to the charge of being a Samaritan? Are some attacks against us and our faith so ludicrous on the surface that they don't deserve a response? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, lead me to someone today with whom I can share the Good News of Jesus. And help me, as this person responds, to...*
2. Jesus saw the charge of having a demon as meant only to dishonor Him. In whose eyes? How? *Some people today still want to dishonor You, Lord, and they do so by...*
3. Jesus was quick to say that He did not seek to honor Himself, to seek glory for Himself. What did He mean by that? Whose glory was Jesus seeking, and how? *You have called me to Your Kingdom and glory, Lord (1 Thess. 2.12), and not to any glory of my own. Guard me today from...*
4. Jesus kept the conversation in a proper light. The Jews were trying to get the people to judge Jesus according to their line, as a deceiver who could not be trusted. How did Jesus reposition this entire conversation in the second part of verse 50? To whom did He point everyone as Judge of this conversation? Why is it important for us to keep this in mind, as we live as witnesses for the Lord? *I know You see all things, Lord, including all my work as a witness. Help me always to remember that...*
5. Rather than back down, Jesus ratcheed up (v. 51). Explain “keeps”, “My Word”, and “never see death.” How do these ideas fit in the Gospel as you proclaim it? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“He provides us with an example of what we should do in such a situation when he adds, ‘I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks and judges.’ We know that it is written that ‘the Father has given all judgment to the Son,’ and yet we see that when the Son receives insulting words he does not seek his own glory. He leaves the offenses offered him for the Father’s judgment. And so he suggests to us how patient we should be when even he, the Judge, does not wish to avenge himself.” *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

We know the Gospel is true, we know that Jesus is Savior and Lord, we know that the Spirit dwells within us in power, we know that God’s Word spoken never returns to Him without accomplishing His purpose, and we know that God the Father watches over us, whom Jesus has sent into the world as His witnesses. How should knowing this affect our witness for the Lord?

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?

3 Heresy!

Read and meditate on John 8.52, 53.

Logic failed them. Denying His good works was useless. Name-calling only emboldened Him more. The religious leaders were determined to hoist Jesus on His own petard, and they were just waiting for the right words. Now they seized on an effort to make His words seem heretical to every sincere son or daughter of Abraham.

*⁵²The Jews said to the Lord,
“Ah, now we know You have a demon! For
our father, Abraham, is dead; what’s more,
the prophets also. Yet You dare to cry,
‘Whoever keeps My Word shall never die.’
⁵³Are You then greater than our father, who
is dead? Or than the prophets, greater too
than all of them? Who do You make Yourself
to be?”*

- John 8.52, 53

Reflect

1. The religious leaders insisted that only someone who was demon-possessed would dare to claim he was greater than Abraham or the prophets. How were the Jews trying to brand Jesus here? Complete this prayer: *Lord, I pray for those unbelievers to whom You are sending me today. Work on their hearts, Lord. Help them to...*

2. In Jewish society of the first century AD, no higher authority existed than Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. So why is Moses not included in this part of the argument of these religious leaders? You might want to review John 7.14-24 (part of this same conversation) as you consider your reply. *Help me to be ready, Lord, with an explanation for the hope that is within me whenever...*

3. Jesus had batted their Moses curve ball out of the park, so they didn’t try it again. They chose a different pitch. They wanted Jesus to claim something, to say that He was greater than Abraham and greater than the prophets. In the mind of first-century Jews, Who would that have been? Why was it important to them that He say this, and not *they*? *I know people don’t like it when they feel like everything they’ve trusted in is useless compared to Jesus, but...*

4. Jesus insisted that all who keep His Word would never see death. The Jewish leaders replied, “Oh yeah? Well *Abraham’s* dead. And *the prophets* are dead.” In saying this, what were they insinuating about Jesus’ words? What does this remark reveal about how much they really understood Jesus? *It’s important to be clear, Lord, when I share the Gospel. Help me think through all the words and promises of the Gospel, so that I can anticipate any sticking points others might have, and...*

5. They wanted Jesus to say, yes, He was greater than Abraham, and yes, He was greater than the prophets. In their minds, such a heretical claim would assault the very foundations of Jewish religious life. Were they right? Explain. Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

“Just as it is inevitable that the good become better as a result of offenses, so the condemned always become worse after receiving a kindness. After they had received his preaching, they repeated, ‘Now we know that you have a demon.’ They had clung to eternal death without realizing that this was the death to which they were clinging.” *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

These religious leaders were making fools of themselves, trying to make a fool of Jesus. How would you describe Jesus' demeanor throughout this lengthy conversation? How can we make sure we are always like this as we bear witness to the Lord?

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 No Lie

Read and meditate on John 8.54, 55.

Someone's lying here, and it's not Jesus. He will, of course, point that out for all to see.

⁵⁴Said Jesus, "If I vaunt Myself, My honor counts for nothing. But the One Who honors Me My Father is, the One of Whom you say He is your God. ⁵⁵Yet You have never known Him – never. But I do, I know Him. And if I should this deny, and say I do not know the Father, I would be a liar, just like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His Word."

- John 8.54, 55

Reflect

1. Again, Jesus deflected the argument away from Himself, but only to focus it back on Himself. He insisted He was not trying to honor Himself, for that would be mere vanity. But, He explained, His Father was honoring Him. How was God the Father honoring Jesus in those day? Should we expect similar "honors" from the Lord? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, You have sent me to be a witness, not just to go witnessing, and this means...*

2. Jesus said that the religious leaders who were confronting Him "have not known" the Father Who honored Him. What did He mean? Meditate on Hosea 4.1-6. How was Jesus merely echoing what God had spoken through Hosea? Why was it important to Jesus to make this point? *Lord, many people are deceived and misled about what they claim to "know." As Your witness, I need to...*

3. Jesus knew they were trying to get Him to say, "I know God the Father." OK, so He said it, in the process, denying that His detractors did. What did He mean? Can you say this as well? Explain. *Lord, I expect that, as I bear witness to You, some people will insist that I cannot know God. However, I...*

4. So, who were the liars here? Jesus pointed them out plainly. Why were they liars? Paul says that all who deny God are living a lie (cf. Rom. 1.18-25; Rom. 3.3, 4). Is this true? Does this mean that people who are living the lie can't know *any* truth? But is it important that they be confronted with the fact that they're living a lie? Explain. *Keep me, Lord, from following the lie in any form. Help me always to...*

5. The Gospel is about *truth*, not about loud claims of authority and who's right and who's wrong, or who's smart and who's dumb. We need always to bear down on the truth of the Gospel, and be ready to expose the lies of our unbelieving age. Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Since they were openly rebuking him for exalting himself over Abraham and the prophets and since they accuse him by saying, 'Who do you make yourself out to be?'—he in effect responds by saying: ... If I spoke about my glory and the things that belong to me, you would not believe me—and with good reason, because I would be testifying about myself. But it is my Father who revealed my glory by testifying about me, as he said above, 'The Father who sent me testifies on my behalf.' You then say you belong to God, but you do not know him; you are not even familiar with him because you do not obey his words. 'I do know him,' and what I do matches perfectly with his testimony about me. Even if I say something pleasing about myself, I say nothing contrary to the previous testimony of the Father about me. This is what he means when he says,

“And I keep his word. If I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you.”” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

These religious leaders were looking for a fight, and Jesus was willing to give it to them, laying bear the false foundations of their worldview, openly denying them any connection with God whatsoever, and exposing them as liars. Whew! Are you prepared for that kind of witness?

Closing Prayer

Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2.10-12

Psalm 2.9-12 (*Agincourt: O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High!*)

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus' grace, and worship before His exalted face!
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

5 The Prophet and the Prophecy

Read and meditate on John 8.56.

How could Abraham, long dead, have seen Jesus' day? He was a prophet, and Jesus was His prophecy!

⁵⁶“And I
know Abraham, agrees with Me, for he,
your ‘father’ Abraham, rejoiced to see
My day. He saw it, and was glad.”

- John 8.56

Reflect

1. They claimed Abraham as their father, but Jesus said they had another father, not the patriarch. Now He granted their claim, but only to make a point. What's the point? Complete the following prayer: *Lord, many people today claim to be children of the Enlightenment, children of reason, logic, understanding, and truth. But if they really were, they would see that...*
2. Abraham “rejoiced” to see the day of Jesus' coming? What did Jesus mean by this? Can you think of any episodes from Abraham's life that Jesus might have had in mind? *All Scripture looks to You, Lord Jesus, so whenever I'm reading Your Word, I...*
3. Meditate on Romans 4.13-25. How did Paul connect Jesus with Abraham? *Lord, we who believe in You are the true children of Abraham, because...*
4. Peter, too, in 2 Peter 1.4, connected Jesus with Abraham, through the promises. Meditate on this passage, as well as 2 Corinthians 1.20. Then go back to read Genesis 12.1-3. How are these promises fulfilled in Jesus? *Bring me more completely into Your precious and very great promises, Lord, that I may rejoice in You as Abraham did, and...*
5. This connection between Jesus and Abraham is extremely important, because it puts Jesus squarely into the midst of God's covenant, as the One for Whom the covenant is intended, and Who fulfills it. The Jews of Jesus' day claimed a place in God's covenant by physical descent and tradition. How do we claim our place in that covenant? And what does that place promise for us? Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“Therefore, he says, after my Father's testimony about me has been explained, now listen to what is in conformity with that [testimony] about me: I am certainly enough of Abraham's superior that he also wished and hoped to see the time when I would reform the world through my passion. And in his desire he saw this, as much as he was allowed to, and clearly rejoiced when, by sacrificing his own son, he revealed his will and received from God the revelation so that he might know what would happen. As he accepted giving his son as a victim for God, so also God would give his Only Begotten for the salvation of the world.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

One more passage linking Abraham to Jesus: meditate on Hebrews 11.17-19. What did Abraham “see” about Jesus and His day, that caused him to rejoice even in the face of an impossible task? What impossible task has God put before you? Are you rejoicing? Are you, like Abraham, looking through the task or trial to the promise of life in Jesus?

Closing Prayer

Oh, give thanks to the LORD!

Call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples!
Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!
Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!
Remember His marvelous works which He has done,
His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,
O seed of Abraham His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!
He is the Lord our God;
His judgments *are* in all the earth.
He remembers His covenant forever,
The word *which* He commanded, for a thousand generations,
The covenant which He made with Abraham...

Psalm 105.1-9a

Psalm 105.1-11 (*Warrington: Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Give thanks unto the Lord Most High; call on His Name, before Him cry!
Make known His deeds in every land; sing praise for all the works of His hand.

Glory in God, rejoice in heart, all you who seek His holy part.
Him and His strength and presence seek; His works proclaim, His judgment speak.

You holy children of Abraham, you chosen ones of Jacob, stand!
He is our Lord, of wondrous worth; His judgments are in all the earth.

He will His covenant faithfully guard – His oath, the promise of His Word.
That which He to our fathers swore, He will perform forevermore!

6 “I AM”

Read and meditate on John 8.57-59.

The Jews made a last, feeble attempt to humble Jesus, at which He took the opportunity to exalt Himself in the most glorious – or, as they saw it, heretical – manner.

⁵⁷Then said the Jews to Him, “Now Abraham is dead, and you are not yet fifty years of age. Have You indeed seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸“I say to you,” replied the Lord, “before your ‘father’ was, I AM.” ⁵⁹They sought to stone Him then because of this, but Jesus hid Himself, and went out from the temple, through the midst of them.

- John 8.57-59

Reflect

1. The religious leaders were furious and floundering. Seizing once more on Jesus’ words, they attempted an *argumentum ad absurdum* – a logical effort to show the fallacy of Jesus’ claims. How did they do this in verse 57? Complete the following brief prayer: *Lord, You and the Gospel – and probably me, too – seem foolish and absurd to those who will not believe. Nevertheless...*

2. Jesus didn’t even try to explain how He, a man of thirty or so, could have possibly been alive to see Abraham. He knew these people weren’t really looking for *answers* or *explanations*. What *were* they looking for? Are there just some objections to Jesus and the Gospel that aren’t worth trying to answer? Explain. *Lord, I don’t have all the answers, and, frankly, many who deny You don’t really want answers, anyway. But they do need the Answer, and that is...*

3. The religious leaders had been trying to catch Jesus in His words, to get Him to say something they could use against Him. They never in a million years would have expected Him to identify Himself with “I AM.” Why? Who is “I AM,” and what was Jesus saying here? *You are the great I AM, Lord Jesus, Whom I worship and serve to...*

4. How did the Jews respond? What does that suggest about how *they* understood what Jesus was saying? People today who insist Jesus never claimed to be God should read this passage, don’t you think? Explain. *Lord, You are Lord and God, Savior and King, and I gladly believe You. Help me boldly to...*

5. They had Him right where they wanted Him. And then He was gone. It wasn’t “His hour.” How do you suppose Jesus “hid Himself” from them? Do you think He was ducking around in the crowd? Or could He Who changed water into wine merely by *thinking* have employed some other means? Explain. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

“Our Redeemer graciously turns their gaze away from his body and draws it to contemplation of his divinity. He says, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ ‘Before’ indicates past time, ‘I am’ present time. Because divinity does not have past and future time but always is, he did not say, ‘I was before Abraham’ but ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ And so it was said to Moses, ‘I am who I am,’ and ‘You will say to the children of Israel, ‘He who is has sent me to you.’” Therefore he who could draw near by manifesting his presence and depart after completing his life existed both before and after Abraham. Truth always exists, because nothing begins before it in time or comes to an end after it.” *Gregory the Great (540-604 AD)*

Meditate on Philippians 2.5-11. What does it mean to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father? How should this fit into your witness for Christ?

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 (*Darvall: 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 ‘Nuff Said

Read and meditate on John 8.48-59.

When Jesus determined the conversation was ended, He left. But not before He had given them – and us – an earful of truth to contemplate.

⁴⁸The Jews then answered, “Is it not the truth that You are a Samaritan, uncouth and rude, and that You have a demon?” ⁴⁹He replied, “I do not have a demon. Me you would dishonor by thus saying: I My Father honor, ⁵⁰for I do not My own glory seek, but His, the One Who seeks and judges. ⁵¹Most assuredly, I speak these words to you: whoever keeps My Word shall never die.” ⁵²The Jews said to the Lord, “Ab, now we know You have a demon! For our father, Abraham, is dead; what’s more, the prophets also. Yet You dare to cry, ‘Whoever keeps My Word shall never die.’ ⁵³Are You then greater than our father, who is dead? Or than the prophets, greater too than all of them? Who do You make Yourself to be?” ⁵⁴Said Jesus, “If I vaunt Myself, My honor counts for nothing. But the One Who honors Me My Father is, the One of Whom you say He is your God. ⁵⁵Yet You have never known Him – never. But I do, I know Him. And if I should this deny, and say I do not know the Father, I would be a liar, just like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His Word. ⁵⁶And I know Abraham agrees with me, for he, your ‘father’ Abraham, rejoiced to see My day. He saw it, and was glad.” ⁵⁷Then said the Jews to Him, “Now Abraham is dead, and you are not yet fifty years of age. Have You indeed seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸“I say to you,” replied the Lord, before your ‘father’ was, I AM.” ⁵⁹They sought to stone Him then because of this, but Jesus hid Himself, and went out from the temple, through the midst of them.

- John 8.48-59

Reflect

1. Jesus’ teaching about Himself had been escalating up to this point. In this, the peroration of His teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus put it all on the line. Everything the Jews of His day were missing, He *was*. And that’s still true today. Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, You alone are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Help me today to...*

2. His enemies were getting bolder, angrier, and more desperate. But Jesus neither avoided them nor let them rage on without response. How would you summarize Jesus' approach to responding to the religious leaders in this situation? What can you learn from Him to improve your own witness? *Thank You, Lord, for showing me so clearly how to...*

3. What kind of responses to Jesus are we seeing to this point? Should we expect anything other than these, as we live as witnesses to the Lord? How can we prepare to deal with each response like Jesus did? *Let me not be afraid of men, Lord, but help me always to...*

4. Jesus "hid Himself" even as He left the temple "through the midst of them." In one sense, He was already "hidden" to them; this is just another facet of that same phenomenon. Is Jesus "hidden" from people today? Is He passing "through the midst" of the people in your Personal Mission Field, without their seeing Him? Is that in some ways inevitable? And in some ways, is it a situation to redress? Explain. *Thank You, Lord, that You have made Yourself known to me, and that You have sent me to make You known to...*

5. Review chapters 7 and 8 to get the full impact of this public disputation between Jesus and the religious leaders of Jerusalem. Why don't we see public disputations like this in our day? Should churches try to create such public witness for Christ, with debates, audiences, and all the tools of logic and personal witness? What might such a disputation look like, if your church sponsored one? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"He passed through them and left the place as if their eyes were closed by divine power so that they might not know how he had left from their midst.... Clearly, then, he slipped away from the Jews and, moving on, he performed the work on the blind man. Right after his discourse, then, one miracle was followed by another. This is so since, on the one hand, he was not seen by those who could see (because they were possessed by blindness) while on the other, he gave sight to the one who did not have the natural ability to see." *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

What a tense, powerful, exhilarating witness the Lord gave in these two chapters! Has He, by His example, emboldened you in your witness for Him? Explain.

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. What's the most important lesson about being a witness for Jesus you have learned from John 8?
2. Why do people get upset when we insist that Jesus is Savior and Lord and King? Should we try to avoid this? How should we respond?
3. What do we learn in this passage about Jesus and God's eternal covenant?
4. Suggest some ways of praying for those for whom Jesus remains hidden. Begin praying those prayers daily for the unbelievers to whom God sends you.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 8.48-59? 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.