

True Freedom (John 8:30–36)

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“As he was saying these things, many believed in him” (John 8:30).

Introduction

1. John 6–8 forms the dividing line between Israel’s expectation of the Christ and His expectation of His followers. It also reveals the divide between the rulers of the Jews, whom John designates as “the Jews,” and the *crowd* (7:49) or ordinary people. The rulers regarded these people as ignorant and *accursed* (being under God’s wrath), not knowing the law. Presumably, the rulers were not under the divine anathema. However, it was not the people that Jesus treated with contempt, but their rulers. These chapters reveal the Jews’ increasing animosity toward Jesus, culminating in their firm commitment to deliver Him to death (John 11:47, 48).
2. Many of the people, on the other hand, were listening to and observing Jesus, drawing various conclusions, which were dividing them (John 7:40–44). Some concluded He was “*that Prophet*” promised by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). Others thought He must be the *Christ* (Messiah), asking, “*When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?*” (John 7:31). Others, however, due to their spiritual blindness, rejected Jesus, although they continued to expect the coming Messiah.
3. Jesus turned His attention to those who *believed* in Him (8:30). John, however, did not mean their believing automatically indicated they were born again. John carefully detailed the evidence that marks a believer as a child of God. As noted earlier, John advised the reader, “*Many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust [believe, same work used at the beginning of the verse] himself to them, because he knew all people*” (John 2:24).

John presumed that those who “believed” in Him were not saved. While they heard His message and saw His miracles, they mistakenly thought Messiah would be given solely to deliver the nation from their Gentile oppressors, not to deliver them from the wrath of God due to their sinful rebellion against God. Therefore, Jesus turned to them and applied the declaration of verse 12: “*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.*” Following Jesus meant that one must “*abide in His word*” (v. 31). In doing so, they would walk in the light and know the truth, thus being designated as true disciples. Jesus promised true disciples would know the truth and, because of that, would be set free from tyranny of sin. Knowing the truth would set them free from sin and the blindness sin brought on the race.

I. The Obligation of Believers

1. The mark of true believers is their abiding in His Word: “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.*” One may claim salvation, but if that one does not abide in His Word, he or she will have a false profession.
 - a. Abiding means to *continue* or *remain* in Christ. One must first *hear* Christ and then be *in* Christ, remaining in Him in spiritual fellowship while continuing to hear Him. This is a work of grace and is the foundation of the doctrine of *endurance* or *perseverance* (John 5:38–40).

b. To *persevere* is to be in a consistent, faithful, and enduring occupation with the teachings of Jesus (John 15:5). It is to obey Him because one finds Him precious and worthy, especially when others are opposed to the believer.

2. Abiding in His Word requires *knowing Him* who is the Truth.

a. “*You will know the truth*” (v. 32). Genuine faith has its own *authentication* (Psalm 26:4; 25:10). *Faithfulness* is truth lived out, being a parallel to covenant commitment. You will “*know the truth,*” not just the verity of something, but you will enter an intimate relationship with Jesus, who *is* the Truth (John 14:6; John 1:14). Faith in Him is not a mere intellectual assent but a moral commitment to righteousness in that relationship (John 7:17).

b. “*You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” Knowing the Truth will result in true freedom. The statement provoked a response in His hearers (v. 33). We must note two things about their response. First, they failed again to understand that Jesus spoke of *spiritual* bondage to sin, not *physical* bondage to enemies. Second, true disciples do not resist the truth, no matter how disagreeable the truth is to them.

II. Bondage to Sin

1. These false disciples began to deny the truth: “[We] *have never been enslaved to anyone.*”

a. How could these people make such a false statement? The Jews’ false confidence rested in their presumed descent from Abraham. Yes, they could trace their DNA to Abraham, but his descendants’ hope was to rest, not on DNA, but the *promises* given Abraham (Galatians 3:7). It was also Abraham’s *obedience* of faith that gave him the standing with God that these Jews counted on (Galatians 3:11).

b. Although the Jews’ ancestry was a great source of pride, God’s promise of Genesis 12:2 was not based on their descent from Abraham, as Paul clearly pointed out in Galatians 3:7–9. Only *one* in their line qualified to receive that blessing (Galatians 3:16; Isaiah 41:8; Romans 9:6–8).

c. The bondage they denied was clear in their response: “*How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’*” (John 8:33). Jesus explained, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin*” (v. 34). The practice of sin enslaves to sin.

2. Jesus pointed out the fact that slaves have no permanent place in the house (v. 35; Matthew 8:10–12). Jesus is the Son who remains forever and. Only Jesus has the power and authority to set sinners free (v. 36). Has He set you free?

Conclusion

1. Are you truly a believer?

a. Are you hearing the Word of Christ?

b. What is the driving force that keeps you on your journey to know Christ?

2. Are you honoring the Son?

a. Real freedom is not the right to do as you please (false grace narrative) but the power (true grace) to do what you ought.

b. Our real identity and satisfaction comes only as we serve the Son of God.