

Those Whom the Son Sets Free are Free Indeed!

John 8:31-47

I. Biblical Context and Historical Background

The people that we know today as Jews came into being when God decided to call **Abram and Sarai** out of the city known as Haran in the land of Ur (Genesis 12). They became known as the Israelites **when God changed Jacob's name to Israel** (Genesis 32, verse 28). Because Jacob's sons sold **Joseph**, their own brother, into slavery, his whole family eventually became **slaves** in Egypt for over **400 years** (Exodus chapters 1 to 12). *They reaped the consequences of their evil deeds! They descended into slavery due to Sin!* Because God is so gracious and merciful, He *delivered* them out of slavery through **Moses** and led them into Canaan under the leadership of **Joshua**. **Because God keeps His own Promises, the Israelites became a free and prosperous nation!** However, they lost their freedom, prosperity and peace due to their *repeated rebelliousness* against God as recorded in the Book of Judges! **Because of their rebellion against God, they became slaves to Sin!** However, because God is so merciful and gracious, He **restored** the territories that they had lost through His faithful servant David! **Unfortunately, generations after generations, the descendants of Abraham repeatedly rebelled against God.** Since the Israelites *persisted* in their sins, the Lord *gave them over* to nations such as the Babylonians, Assyrians and eventually the Romans! *Therefore, over the centuries, the Israelites not only lost their nationhood, but more importantly, they also lost their relationship with God.* **Because they rebelled against God, they became slaves to Sin!** But the Gracious, Merciful and Loving God sent His Son to offer Salvation to anyone who desires to be *reconciled* with Him by **faith** and **repentance!**

During the time of Jesus, the Israelites were under the Roman rule. Even though God is mentioned in the Jerusalem Temple and the Jewish synagogues, the Israelites were just holding on to traditions and rituals. Even though the Jews thought that they were special, in God's eye, they were as sinful as everybody else! Even though the Jews were the **descendants of Abraham and Sarah**, God's Plan of Salvation was for all sinners from the beginning! ***They too needed the Salvation which could only come through Jesus Christ by faith!*** Jesus came to offer *the world* the Divine Message of Truth and Salvation which will **free sinners** from the path of lies, hatred, destruction and death!

II. The Lesson: Those Whom the Son Sets Free are Free Indeed!

One of the things Jesus did throughout His earthly Ministry is **to expose the false beliefs, false notions and false claims** the Jewish people *held on* and *propagated* for generations. The Jews *thought* reading, studying and reciting the Law could save them. ***But studying the Law also meant obeying the Law in practice.*** *The Pharisees failed because they didn't practice what they preached!* Furthermore, the Jews *claimed* just being the **descendants of Abraham** *made them righteous before God.* **But the Bible says, Abraham's faith in God was credited to him as righteousness** (Genesis 15:6). Because the Jews were *entrenched in* these **false claims**, they remained **slaves to their own sins**. That is why in John chapter 8, Jesus repeatedly told the Jews that they "**will die in their sins**" unless they believed in the Truth.

1. vv. 31-32. The “If, Then Clause” Still Applies!

a) **Verse 31.** “To the Jews who had believed in Him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples.’” We need to pay attention to few things right away.

- Recall that the Pharisees not only claimed that they are the teachers of God’s Word (Old Testament scrolls), but they also stood in opposition to the teachings of Jesus. Claiming to know God’s Word is *radically different* from *actually knowing The Word!* Similarly, claiming to know God is *radically different* from *actually knowing God and believing in Him!* Claiming to know the Truth is *radically different* from *actually speaking and living in the Truth!*
- **Jesus spoke specifically to “the Jews who believed” in Him.** Jesus *emphasized* to them that “**they must hold to His teaching**” as opposed to the teachings of the Pharisees in order for them to become **His disciples**. To “hold on” implies:
 - ✓ a *determined effort* by the believer to **stay connected to Jesus**
 - ✓ a *genuine desire* by the believer to **overcome falsehood** by the Truth.
 - ✓ a *strong grasp on the Truth* which repels lies and deceptions
 - ✓ a *sincere commitment* to **life-long learning** about Jesus – The Word.
- ✓ **The Believer’s Relationship to Jesus is Conditional as denoted by “if, then” clause.** The relationship between Christ and the Believer is **Sacred**. It is also based on a **Covenant Relationship** consisting of Love, Faith, Obedience, Commitment, Worship, etc. Read **Deuteronomy 29 and 30; John 15:1-17 (vv. 5-10)**, for example.

Therefore, the Believer cannot claim to be in relationship with Jesus while he/she continues to sin! (Also, read **1 John 3:1-10**).

b) **Verse 32. Only the Truth Shall Set You Free!** The *only Source* of the Truth is God. The *only* teacher of The Truth is Jesus! Only Jesus is the Savior, the Salvation of the world! Therefore, True Freedom can only be found in Jesus Christ! Hallelujah! It is good for us to hold on to His Teaching!

2. v. 33. A Believer Can Make False Claims!

The Jews who believed in Jesus **claimed** that they “**have never been slaves of anyone.**” This **claim is false** on many levels – historically, biblically and doctrinally. Both historically and biblically, we know that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, Canaan, Babylon, Assyria, etc. In addition, **doctrinally**, just like everyone else, **they were slaves to sin**. Just because the Law was given to them, the Jews thought it saved them. But the Law was given to show them how sinful they were! **The Bible teaches that all of us are sinners (Psalm 14:3; Psalm 143:2; Isaiah 59:1-21; Romans 3:19-26).** **A Believer Can Make False Claims!**

We too, in this generation, can make false claims due to ignorance and arrogance; both are sins. Not all Christians who believe in Jesus are committed to studying the Bible; hence, they can make false claims about their faith out of *ignorance*. Furthermore, those Christians who study the Bible (scholars, theologians, etc.) can make false claims just like the Pharisees out of

arrogance. **Just like the Jews, Christians have made claims that were not true.** What are some examples of **false claims** Christians have made over the centuries?

- A Believer *can* **earn his or her Salvation** by his/her **good works** in the church;
- One can become a Believer by being a member of a church or because he/she was born to parents who grew up in the church;
- Homosexuals **cannot receive Salvation** or cannot belong in the church;
- Blacks *must not* attend White congregations because **God created them inferior** to the White race. (This is one example of the *misrepresentation/misinterpretation* of the Bible by White Christians to promote and maintain **slavery** and racism in the United States contrary to God's Truth).

Christians must understand that (a) **false claims** are *misrepresentations* of the **Truth** and (b) **false claims** can *mislead* and *hurt* people! As disciples of Christ, we are commanded to **"grow in the knowledge of Christ"** in order for us (a) to be transformed and (b) to bear fruit for the kingdom (Read **Ephesians** chapters 4 & 5; **Colossians** 2:6-12; **2 Peter** 1:1-11).

3. **vv. 34-41. Only the Truth Can Set You Free!**

Notice that the Truth and Jesus are *linked* in verses 31-32; 34-36. The Truth is found only in God. Jesus had already told the Jews that His Father is God and that He was sent by His Father in heaven (vv. 14-18). Jesus wanted to establish in their hearing that as **the Son of God, He has the Power to set them free** (if they believe in Him). Traditionally, the challenge for the Jews was to *admit* that Jesus, and not their *ancestral ties to Abraham*, can free them from slavery to sin. Spiritually, they must be able to understand the Truth that it is God who *freed* Abraham from slavery to sin. **In other words, in order for the Jews to be free, they must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and accept the Truth will set them free.**

- a) **Verse 37.** None of **Abraham's Characteristics** were *evident* in the Jews who **claimed** to be his descendants. Jesus challenged them by saying Abraham didn't try to kill God. On the contrary, Abraham *believed* in God and *obeyed* His Word.
- b) **Verse 38, 41.** For the Jews to claim that they are the *heirs* of Abraham, they must prove that they are able to *discern* **God's Presence** and **live by His Truth**. Jesus even pressed harder by saying "you do what you have heard from your father;" Jesus meant, other than Abraham's Father!
- c) **Verses 39-40. Your Ancestry Does Not Make You a Believer.** Only a Personal Relationship with God based on Faith, Obedience and Dedication to Service makes one a Believer. Abraham had a personal relationship with God. Abraham believed and obeyed God not because of his ancestral background. The Jews got it twisted! Therefore, Jesus said to them in verse 39 and 40 **"If you were Abraham's children, then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me"** because I am telling you the Truth! **Your claim to your ancestry does not make you a believer!** Accepting the Truth does! Translation: *You cannot hear or understand the Truth because you don't know God, Abraham's Father!* Your claim to your ancestry can neither make you a believer nor free you from your sins! **Only the Truth Can Set You Free!**

4. vv. 42-47. **He Who Belongs to God Hears What God Says!**

In this section, Jesus really brought the hammer down!

a) **Verses 42-43. Those Whose Belong to the Devil Cannot Understand the Truth.**

Jesus told the Jews that the reason they couldn't hear or understand **the Truth** is because they **don't love God!** In verse 43, Jesus made it clear that the reason the Jews couldn't understand His "language" was because they "**belonged to the devil.**" **Those Whose Belong to the Devil Cannot Understand the Truth!**

On the other hand, those who truly love God also love the Truth. Those who love God understand the language of love and truth! Jesus makes clear the connection between God, Love and the Truth. *Those who love God are capable of accepting the Truth.*

b) **Verses 44-4: Those Who Belong to God Can Accepting the Truth.**

Jesus told the Jews that the reason they couldn't hear or understand the **Truth** is because they **belong to the devil!** Jesus told the Jews that the reason they are determined to **kill** Him is because **their father is the devil!** Jesus made it clear that:

- Since they belong to the devil, they "want to carry out" the devil's agenda;
- The devil
 - ✓ Murderer from the Beginning,
 - ✓ Incapable of the Truth because "there is no truth in him,"
 - ✓ Liar; lying is "his native language,"
 - ✓ Lies because he is "the father of lies,"
- They can't accept Him because **the devil** is their "**father.**"

III. **The Conclusion**

The conclusion of the matter is stated in verse 47: "**He Who Belongs to God Hears What God Says!**"

- Those who love God also love His Son!
- Those who love God also love His Truth!
- Those who love God also accept the Truth!
- **The Truth Shall Set You Free!**
- "**He who belongs to God hears what God says!**"