

Sin and Slavery, Freedom, and the Son

(John 8:31-36)

INTRODUCTION:

1. By the time we get to John 8 things are tense between Jesus and the Jewish leaders.
 - A. In chapter seven there were accusations of Sabbath breaking because Jesus made a man whole who had been ill forty years. And, the Pharisees had attempted to arrest Jesus.
 - B. In chapter 8:
 - i. Jesus had embarrassed the Pharisees who tried to entrap him by presenting an adulterous woman to him and questioning him about what was to be done with her.
 - ii. There were heated exchanges over Jesus' claim to be the light of the world and whether his testimony was true, resulting in another attempt to arrest Him.
 - iii. But then, because Jesus spoke about coming from the Father, the things He received from the Father, and how his being "lifted up" would result in the people knowing He is the Christ, many came to believe in Him.
 - C. Our text today and our lesson is about what Jesus had to say to those who *believed*.
 - i. For, Jesus had a ready audience, one listening and wondering about Him being the Messiah.
 - ii. What would Jesus, the Messiah, say to such an audience at such a crucial time?
2. The answer is not what most would expect to be said to Jews or told us today. For, He spoke to them of **sin** and their **slavery**, and of **freedom** offered by Him, the Son.
 - A. These this is our topic today.
 - B. I hope by considering Jesus words we will come away appreciating more fully the freedom Christ gives or if you do not have it today, wanting to have that freedom.

BODY:

I. Sin and slavery:

- A. Now that Jesus had their attention, He addresses their most fundamental need—*freedom* (8:31-32 – “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”).
 1. Though those addressed were *Jews* that had *belief* in Jesus, they still needed **to be freed**.
 2. For, Jesus clearly stated the most **outrageous** and **unwelcomed truth** (in the Jews' eyes), that they were in fact **enslaved**.
- B. And as is so often the case even today, they denied their slavery (8:33 – “They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and **have never yet been enslaved to anyone**; how is it that **You** say, ‘You will become free?’”).
 1. Note that the “You” in “how is it **You** say” is emphatic. They were challenging Jesus!
 - a. So, despite following Jesus around and listening to his words, they were not disciples, being all too quick to challenge His words when found contrary to their own thoughts.
 - b. This was the first of 11 references to Abraham in the chapter, all of which concern their rejecting Jesus and the truth, which Jesus said wasn't like Abraham (8:39-40).
 2. Their problem was that because they were *Abraham's children*, they felt they did not need to be *freed, having never been enslaved*.
 - a. For, God had promised that the seed of Abraham and Sarah would be kings of peoples and would possess the gate of their enemies (Gen. 17:16; 22:17).
 - b. Yet, we know the Jews had been conquered by and subjected to many nations due to their sin and rejection of God's covenant. And at that time, they were subject to the Romans.
 - i. So, some have suggested that these Jews were referring to being spiritually free despite their physical bondage.
 - ii. And, that is the biblical truth about freedom, that one can be spiritually free despite being in physical bondage.
 - iii. Yet, it is hard for me to believe that was their meaning. **And, unfortunately, in their case neither position was true**. They had been in physical bondage and were in spiritual bondage.

3. So, as is true even for Jesus, one of the greatest barriers to freeing those enslaved to sin is convincing them of their enslavement, convincing them that they need freeing.
- C. Jesus responds and gets right to the heart of the matter (8:34 – “Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”).
1. Did you get that? Everyone who commits sin, *habitually* commits it, is the slave of sin!
 - a. That was Israel’s greatest problem. And it is the world’s greatest problem today.
 - b. Jesus did not address political, economic, or social slavery, but slavery in its worst and most common form, spiritual slavery to sin.
 2. We know Jesus’ words to be true.
 - a. When you know God’s will, and want to obey, but continually finds yourself consumed in the guilt of your sin, maybe the same sin, you must admit that you are acting like a slave, like you are not free to make the right decision!
 - b. When you find that you are trying regularly to convince yourself that you are not a slave to some sin, that you will overcome it, that this time, unlike the many, many times before, will be different, you are likely a slave to that sin—it has control of you.
 - c. This same slavery exists in non-Christians as well, even in those who may not know God’s will.
 - i. Unbelievers make moral judgments of others’ actions all the time (i.e., “What he/she did was wrong!”; “That’s not right!”, “That is just plain evil!”, etc.).
 - ii. If on the Day of Judgment God played back every moral judgement that person made against someone else and said, “Where do you stand in light of your own moral judgments?”, what would be the verdict?
 - iii. **Guilty!** of course, seeing the one who accused also acted like a slave, like one who was not free to refrain from the very acts he/she condemned in others!
 - iv. This was the case of the Jews (Rom. 2:1).
 3. Jesus spoke to **slaves**, people in sin, who consequently could not affect their own release.

II. Jesus Addresses the road to freedom

- A. As we see throughout Scripture, with the acknowledgement of their slavery came God’s revelation of the way to freedom (8:31-32 – “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”).
1. It is a road made possible by Christ and the work God accomplished in Him (Jn. 1:14 – “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, **full of grace and truth.**”).
 2. Christ’s work brought grace and truth, both of which are required for our freedom from sin.
- B. To enter the road to freedom one must first believe in Jesus
1. Remember, those who Jesus was speaking to were “believers.”
 2. Without belief one will never enter the road.
 - a. Jn. 8:24 – “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”
 - b. Romans 10:17 – “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”
 - c. When one lacks enough faith to be motivated to seek out, to put forth the effort, to find the freedom offered in Christ and his words, that one’s sin and its death will remain.
 3. That was the problem facing these Jews. They “believed,” but their faith was not strong enough to bring them to accept Christ’s words.
 - a. For, as we have already seen, when Jesus’ words contradicted their own thoughts, they were quick to reject them.
 - b. That is not the action of true believers—those who believe to the salvation of their souls!
 4. So, *to enter the path to freedom* one must **believe Jesus**...his words...his claims.
- C. The next step on that road is to **continue in His word** so one can become a **disciple**.
1. Here Jesus presented a most importance truth that the religious world has rarely understood—that belief and discipleship are two very different things.

- a. Many accept the reality that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior, which the religious world celebrates as their entrance into salvation.
 - b. Yet here Jesus teaches that mere acknowledgement of this truth does not make one a follower, a pupil, a disciple of Jesus.
2. To be a disciple requires that one **continue**, remain, dwell, or stand in Jesus' words.
- a. To a disciple, Christ's words must be more than just a passing interest or a weekly curiosity, or something to accept when you agree with it.
 - b. His words must become one's **devotion**, one's guide for salvation and life.
- D. The third step is to **know the truth that makes one free**.
- 1. This is the logical result to abiding in Christ's words, because Christ's word is the truth (Jn. 16:12-14 – "**I** have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all **the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but **whatever He hears, He will speak**; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will **glorify Me**, for He will **take of Mine** and will disclose it to you.").
 - a. The **words of Jesus** are the **truth** the Spirit revealed to the apostles.
 - b. When one abides in Jesus' words, he is abiding in and learning the truth. - 2. But something, again, the religious world has not seen, or refuses to see, is that **knowing the truth** that sets one free **requires that one obey that truth**.
 - a. Rom. 6:17-18 – "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you **became obedient** from the heart to that **form of teaching** to which you were **committed**, ¹⁸ and **having been freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness."
 - b. 1 Pet. 1:22 – "Having **purified your souls by your obedience to the truth** for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart" - 3. So, the final step on the road to freedom from sin is to come to the knowledge of the truth and obey it!

III. Freedom and the Son

- A. When God's Son makes you free, you are free indeed! (8:35-36 – "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.").
- 1. To make His point, Jesus presents a parable of a slave versus a son (8:35).
 - 2. Slaves, as these Jews knew quite well, have no claim to a permanent position in the household. Slaves can be cast out, sold, etc.
 - a. This is not just a statement of fact; it was the truth about the Jews!
 - b. For, these Jews believed that as "descendants of Abraham," they had an abiding position in God's household.
 - c. Here Jesus' parable must have stung, seeing it showed that because of their sin and the *slavery* it produced, their confident claim was unfounded!
 - 3. On the other hand, the son, or **Jesus**, does have a permanent place in the household.
 - a. Jesus' parable showed a vast difference in himself and these Jews.
 - b. They were slaves because of sin, but Jesus the Son is not because He has no sin.
- B. Because Jesus is God's Son, he has the power to set slaves free!
- 1. No one on earth has this authority, the power to set people free from sin, not even yourself!
 - a. Sinners *on their own* can be sure of one thing from their actions—condemnation to death (Rom. 6:20-21 – "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the **outcome of those things is death**.").
 - b. Why is this true? Because our sin renders us helpless in the matter, requiring God through His Son to provide the means of freedom (Rom. 5:6-8 – "For while **we were still helpless**, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly**. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But

- God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.**”).
2. Thanks be to God that through the work of Jesus, the Son, we can be free from sin (Rom. 8:1 – “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. If you are a slave to sin living outside of Christ and truly desire to be freed, Jesus says your journey begins with faith in Him and obedience in baptism.
 - A. Rom. 6:3-7 – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** have been **baptized into His death?** ⁴ Therefore we have been **buried with Him through baptism into death**, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in **newness of life.** ⁵ For **if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,** ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, **so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;** ⁷ **for he who has died is freed from sin.**”
 - B. Col. 2:12-13 – “having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him **through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.**”
2. If you are a Christian again enslaved to sin, God offers you grace and forgiveness through repentance, prayer, and returning to Him.
3. Choose freedom in the Son today!
 - A. Leave slavery and submit to Christ and receive freedom and gain hope of eternal life!
 - B. Will you come to Jesus today?