

Free Indeed

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[0:00] Amen. Amen. You may be seated, kids. You may go to your King's Kids class. And I just want to give a heartfelt thank you to everyone who labored around the building yesterday, who poured out sweat as you spread mulch and other things. So thank you so much for all of you who did that.

You know, I was, if you would open up your Bibles to John 8, we're going to be looking at John 8, verses 30 through 38. It's on page 1063 of your Pew Bible.

As you're turning there, I just want to share with you, early this month I was at a pastor's gathering. Great bunch of guys from all around southeastern Wisconsin, different denominations represented all of Jesus. And as a part of introducing ourselves, because that's what you do when you get together as pastors. We are supposed to say our name, our church, our role, the number of years you're at your church, and your favorite major league baseball team. Truth in advertising, I am not an MLB fan. I like watching highlights from time to time.

And so when it came around to me, I was just honest. I'm like, I don't really have a major league baseball team. But there was this other pastor. He introduced himself, shared all of his information. And then he claimed that he was a Milwaukee Brewers fan.

Immediately, another pastor from on the other side of the circle, a circle that's supposed to be unifying. The other pastor says, oh yeah, what was last night's score?

[1:36] To which this pastor, shocked, said, I don't know. And what quickly became apparent to all of us pastors is that we had an imposter. An imposter in our presence. A false fan. Someone who claimed to be a Brewers fan, but didn't even know the score. The truth of the Milwaukee Brewers was not abiding in him.

It was so funny. We all laughed for a long time over that. But as you know, there are also pseudo-believers in Jesus Christ.

Imposters. Christians in name only. False believers. And this morning, what we will see are some people who claim to be believers in Jesus, but are actually imposters.

And Jesus shows it. He confronts it. And what we're going to see in John 8, it's going to raise some questions in us.

Some very appropriate questions. So, how do I know that I am a true disciple of Jesus Christ?

Jesus is going to tell us in this passage. He's going to share with us what is the defining characteristic of a disciple of Jesus, a Christian.

[3:07] Second, how do we flourish as true disciples of Jesus? How do we live in this freedom that Jesus has accomplished for us?

What does that look like? So, with those questions in mind, let me read John 8, 30-38. As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Verse 30. Many Jews. Verse 31. So, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

They answered him, We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free? Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son remains forever. So, if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are the offspring of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you.

[4:19] I speak of what I have seen with my father, and you do what you have heard, from your father. So, we're going to walk through this. I'm going to point out three things along the way.

True discipleship, verses 30 through 32. Jesus defines that for us. We're going to see in verse 33, a very revealing objection. And then, in 34 through 38, Jesus lays out two ways to live.

Slavery or sonship. So, let's dig in. Let's look at what Jesus has to say about true discipleship in verses 30 through 32. In John 8, Jesus has just made this big, brilliant, God-sized claim, I am the light of the world.

He claims to be the son of man, verse 28. And when you lift up the son of man, talking about the cross, you will know that I am he, the great I am, incarnate.

You will know that I am. And we're told in verse 30 by John that many of the Jews who were listening to him believed in him. Does anybody know who Debbie Boone is?

[5:36] 1970s? You got it. You light up my life. You can finish it. Make me whole. It's like this. Jesus has just shared I'm the light of the world and we have these Jews who are listening and they're like, you light up my life.

Quite a response. If this was like an evangelistic crusade, we would have had a lot of decisions. But Jesus knows what's in the heart of a man.

John 2. And so in verse 31, Jesus says, time out. Time out. He tells these Jews who have professed faith in him, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

It's a major clarification. It's a major pumping of the brakes. He knows something else is going on here. And so he's clarifying to these professing disciples of what it really means to become his disciples.

So here we have in verse 31, God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will die and be raised, who's reigning on high, he himself is going to help us understand what it means to be his true disciple.

[7:01] Anybody want to know? Truly my disciple. Truly just means genuine, legit, all the way through.

And a disciple was back in the first century, someone who was a learner, someone who was a follower. They would follow their master around, listen to their master's teachers, watch how they lived that teaching out, and imitate them to become like them.

And so what Jesus is saying, hey, if you want to be my true disciple, a genuine follower of me, a genuine Christian, here's the good life. He says, if you abide in my word.

Abiding in his word is the distinguishing mark of a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. The word is a reference to Jesus' teaching.

His teaching on all things, the truth of the matter, what reality is. So whatever Jesus has to say about God, God his Father, whatever he has to say about himself, whatever he has to say about our condition, it's part of living in this world, our greatest need.

[8:19] What is the good life? Whatever Jesus says is the good life. I'm to abide in that. We're to abide in that. But we're to abide in that. And it will set us free.

That word abide is an important word in the gospel of John. You know it, many of you, by heart, from John 15, 5, where Jesus says, I'm the vine and you are the branches.

If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. But apart from me, you can do nothing. This sense of abiding is purposeful.

It's, Jesus selects it for a reason. It's not accidental. And this sense of abiding carries this sense of ongoing dependence.

It's not just like, check, I believe in Jesus. Now I move on with the rest of my life. What it is, is a purposeful, ongoing dependence on Jesus from here on out.

[9:26] So when you hear the word abide, think in terms of ongoing dependence. And when you hear the word dependence, think of vital dependence. I need him to live.

I need him for life. He's the bread of life. And not just a dependence for life, a dependence for light. As by way of like explanation. What Jesus has to say is the final word on it. Whatever he has to say on anything is the final word on it.

How Jesus makes sense of the world when it comes to our sexuality, when it comes to how we're to relate to money and success and to others, that's the word we're to abide in.

To depend on. What Jesus is talking about here is another way of making Jesus the controlling center of your life.

[10:30] Where he is the central operating system of your being. Where he's the sun of your solar system. And you orbit him. He doesn't orbit you.

And this abiding too carries the sense of ongoing dependence on Jesus for light and life. In other English versions, this word abide gets translated remain. If my words remain in you. and it's emphasizing this kind of persevering in, staying in all the way through, depending on Jesus, his person and his words for light and life until the end.

As Jesus says in Matthew 24, and those who endure to the end will be saved. A genuine faith is a persevering faith. So what Jesus is essentially saying here is we never outgrow our need for him. So these words, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples. This is the distinguishing mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 52] And the result is that you know the truth and the truth will set you free. Is that you're living in reality. You recognize that what Jesus has to say rings true.

And you are now living in the good life. To abide in his word is to live the good life. It's to actually be free.

One of the illustrations I use to describe conversion and ongoing dependence is good old Nicholas Copernicus. Before Nicholas Copernicus showed up in the 1600s, everyone believed that the sun orbited the earth.

But what Copernicus discovered is that the earth orbits the sun. And what conversion is is essentially this. You are born, you come out of your mama and you're like, in your sinful deadness, you just think everything's about you.

I'm the center of my solar system. But when you come to hear the greatest news ever declared, that Jesus died and was raised from the dead, and you are brought into reality that Jesus is actually the controlling center of all things, and he's always been the controlling center of all things.

[13 : 23] it's not new when you were converted. It's always been true. That is being brought into reality. That is being set free.

That's the truth of it. And there's fullness of joy in it. This is the good life. And might I just say, there is this misconception out there that freedom means independence.

That's not what Jesus means by freedom. To be set free is to be brought into a life-giving relationship with the living God. It's a life of dependence.

So here is Jesus clarifying for these imposter disciples what a true disciple of his really is, what he's really marked by, what she's really marked by.

And that is an ongoing dependence on Jesus. Jesus isn't interested in drawing a crowd. What Jesus is interested in is people genuinely understanding what it means to become his follower.

[14 : 37] So we've looked at this true discipleship. Now in verse 33 we have a revealing objection. Let me just read it. Jesus just said, hey, you'll know the truth and the truth will set you free.

And the Jews answered back, the Jews who believed in him, we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say you will become free?

What this objection reveals is the truth of Jesus is not abiding in them. They show their defining relationship.

they just professed with their mouth the relationship which means most to them. They're offspring of Abraham.

We are physical descendants of Abraham and therefore we've not been enslaved to anyone or anything at any time. That's their claim.

[15 : 44] They respond to Jesus' words to be set free and they're saying but hey we're offspring of Abraham. What are you talking about? And it seems to be that they're hearing Jesus say something politically.

You've never been a politic. You need to be set free from being politically oppressed. That's not what Jesus is saying but that's what it sounds like they're thinking but they have forgotten that they've actually been enslaved to Egypt and to Babylon Shadrach Meshach and Abednego.

What's going on here is we're seeing pride in them. They are holding up the thing that defines them. They're thinking too highly of themselves that they ought. And this is a huge red flag. Because what Jesus has just said is if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples.

They are not abiding in his word. If they were abiding in his word they would say Jesus you are everything. When reality is they think Abraham's are everything.

[17 : 03] what defines you rules you. And you can only be ruled by one thing.

If something or someone other than Jesus is giving you primary meaning in life, primary purpose for life, the primary definition of your life, you got to understand that is there's no life there.

There's no light there or just very limited life, very limited light. So if your job is what defines you, it's not going to last. You can't live off that.

if your health is what defines you, the primary kind of the relationship that governs all other relationships, if that's your health, marital status, your race, your ethnicity, a cause that you are undertaking.

If you're a Packers fan and your Packers fan-ness defines everything about you, or if you're a Bears fan and your Bears fan-ness defines everything about you, it's not big enough.

[18 : 27] Ease, entertainment, storing up treasure in heaven, Matthew 6. Jesus in Matthew 6 talks about that you can't serve two masters.

You'll love one and hate the other. You'll despise one and be devoted to the other. You can't serve both God and mammon. You can't serve both God and your job. You can't serve both God and your health.

It's one or the other. So this objection, we are offspring of Abraham. These Jews have totally missed what Jesus has been saying.

We're not enslaved. They're enslaved. They're blind in their sin. This pride blinds them. It gives them a selective memory.

It's a spiritual forgetfulness of what my history is, of what I've done. Jesus is saying something completely radical here and they miss it.

[19 : 40] You see, our greatest need, the greatest need of every person in this room is not some kind of freedom from political slavery or racial slavery or cultural slavery or economic slavery.

our greatest need is to be rescued from the slavery to sin. The penalty of sin, which is God's wrath poured out on sinners justly.

From the power of sin, which is sin's grip on you to make you obey its desires. That's our greatest need.

Now, this slavery to sin, it creeps into all those different spheres. It creeps into politics and race and culture and economics, no doubt.

But at the heart of this is a pride. Not seeing your true need. They don't see that they need to be set free from sin.

[20 : 52] They're spiritually blind. Maybe you've experienced this. You're sharing the gospel with a friend of yours, and you've just broached the topic of sin. You're explaining that we're all sinners and that our sin carries this just penalty, that God is just and pouring out his wrath on this.

And you turn to your friend and you're like, are you tracking with me? And your friend says something like this, what do I need to be saved from? They're like, don't hear you. Like, what's the problem?

I'm okay. I don't need to be rescued. They're spiritually blind. They haven't been given ears to hear or a heart to understand. And that's what's going on in these Jews who have professed belief in Jesus.

What the objection reveals is that they're not true disciples. The word of Jesus is not abiding in them. because a true disciple sees their very real need to be set free from sin.

Now, the question is, how is Jesus going to respond to this objection? And in verses 34 through 38, Jesus says there are two ways to live.

[22 : 20] Slavery or sonship. so to this objection of these pseudo believers, Jesus in 34 drops another truly, truly.

Truly, truly, truly, truly, I say to you. We've bumped into a number of these truly, truly, I say to you's.

It's Jesus saying something like, listen carefully because I am going to set the record straight.

that's the kind of emphasis he's leading with. He's like, listen up. Truly, truly, I say to you.

And what does he say? Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. And what happens here in 34 through 38 is a contrast between those who are slaves to sin and those who are sons and daughters of God.

Who've been made sons and daughters of God by faith in Jesus. They've been born again. And so there's this contrast that follows here because Jesus is just spelling it out for these people who have just objected to him.

[23 : 36] It's like, just to be clear, there's only two ways to live. Back in the first century, in one household, you could have slaves and free men and women living under the same roof.

You could have children of slaves who have no promise of inheritance, very little rights, growing up with children of a free man or a free woman, and that child has the promise of an inheritance, that child has rights, and they're growing up in the same household together, and the major difference between the two is their relationship to the head of the home, whether they call him father or not. And this contrast gets spelled out by Jesus. He's not saying that slavery is okay. He's using it as an illustration.

So let me just point you to a few of the contrasts that get developed here. There's a contrast of nature. The nature of someone who's a slave to sin and someone who is a son or daughter of God. In verse 34, Jesus says, whoever practices sin is a slave to sin. And if you are a Christian in the room and you're like, oh no, I think that might mean me because I keep on doing the same sin.

[25:03] Have you been repenting of that sin? Have you been seeking to change from that sin? Have you been confessing that and seeking help on that? Are you being honest about it?

Because those who practice sin are those people who don't care, who are unrepentant in their sin. They hear the name of Jesus, they say, you light up my life, but their lives don't change.

They're still enslaved to the power of sin because they obey sinful desires. They are enslaved to the penalty of sin. They're under God's wrath.

They are living in darkness because they're unrepentant. They have not been born again. These are those who are slaves to sin.

It's by nature they are children of wrath, under God's wrath. Contrast that with those who've been set free. true disciples.

[26:10] If you flip back in your Bible to John chapter 1. In John chapter 1, starting in 11, this is the prologue, and John writes this.

Speaking of Jesus, the word, the true light, came to his own. He came to the Jewish people and He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

That's what we're seeing going on right here. They don't believe in him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Children of God are born of God. They're born of the Holy Spirit. They've been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. They have a whole new nature. The Spirit has come and indwelt them, and now there's this holy conflict in you with your desire to sin.

There's a desire to walk in holiness, to share in the divine nature, 1 Peter 3, 1-3. So what we have here are a contrast of people, a contrast of natures, and the freedom that the sons of God and the daughters of God have been given, is not freedom to go on sinning.

[27:37] It's not freedom to live independently. It's the freedom to now live for God with joy and fullness of the Holy Spirit. Because we are now dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

another contrast is evidence evidence of slavery to sin versus evidence of sonship in verse 37 we see Jesus say I know that you are offspring of Abraham I know that you're genetically descendant from Abraham yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you do you see what Jesus is saying there he's saying you're a slave to sin here's how I know you still want to kill me you're still murderous you're still practicing sin you haven't changed and so Jesus is able to point to something very specific and concrete that shows them something has not changed not so those who've been born of God those who are children of God they've been set free and because the word

Christ's word abides in them they want to please God they're not perfect but they're changing they're being changed by God's grace whereas those who are living in slavery to sin want to kill other people they're murderous they're hateful it's the complete opposite for those who belong to Jesus in just a few chapters Jesus after dinner is going to wash his disciples feet and then he's going to say to them a new commandment I give to you that you love one another just as I have loved you you are to love one another it is a mark of a true follower of Jesus to love others even your enemies evidence when we are living a life of dependence on Jesus we are transformed into his image there's a result in verse 35 the slave does not remain in the house forever the son remains forever if you're a slave to sin the penalty of God's wrath is over your head the power of sin reigns in your life unchecked and because of that you will not remain in the house of God forever that's just another way of saying you're going to be cast out but for those who are sons and daughters of God those who have been born of God it's all by grace nothing that they have done they remain in the house forever because they're sons and daughters they've been brought into the

family of faith and that can never be undone which brings us to the third contrast contrasting daddies contrasting parents

Jesus says in verse 38 I speak of what I have seen with my father and you do what you have heard from your father so if Jesus' father is God most high and he brings us into his family by faith through his blood we are adopted by that same father and so we are adopted sons and daughters of God most high it's all by God's grace he is our dad he's our father now so we call out to him but Jesus says to these Jews and you do what you have heard from your father now given the context we've just read when they say we are the offspring of Abraham you might think Jesus is talking about Abraham Jesus is not talking about Abraham if you if your eye just tracks down the column to verses let's see here 42

Jesus said to them if God were your father you would love me for I came from God and I am here I came not of my I came not of my own accord but he sent me why do you not understand what I say it is because you cannot bear to hear my word it's not abiding in them and he goes on you are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father's desires he was a murderer from the beginning and he does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him when he lies he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies how's that for a confrontation contrasting parents so there is a series of contrasts by which Jesus responds to their objection he is saying there are there are slaves to sin and there are children of God by nature fundamentally different by the grace of God there is there is a contrast of evidence the slaves to sin hate they are murderous but those who are children of God they abide in the word of Jesus they love the result slaves to sin are forever out of God's house but those who are children of God by his grace remain in his house forever because slaves to sin their daddy is the devil but those who are children of God have God the father as their father quite a contrast isn't it here's the point anyone can say that they believe in Jesus anyone can those who continually depend on Jesus are his true disciples those who have been adopted by grace as sons and daughters set free from sin in order to live for Christ and they live for Christ all the way to the end they are the true disciples of Jesus so let's ask two questions how do you know if you're a true disciple of Jesus

[34 : 42] Christ how do you know if you're legit well let me just ask you what is governing your life who is governing your life what relationship is governing all of your other relationships who matters most to you what are you willing to sacrifice for does your relationship with Jesus define you is your knowledge of Jesus increasing is your delight in Jesus increasing is your obedience to Jesus increasing is your praying to Jesus increasing is your witnessing to Jesus increasing maybe you're in the room you're like no and I don't want to thank you I don't need to be saved I don't need any of that you're responsible for your own decision before the Lord but maybe you're in the room and you are realizing oh no

I have not been continually abiding in Jesus but I want to start that that sounds glorious that that sounds like something I was made for and you were today's the day you become a follower of Jesus here's what you do you just pray you say Lord Jesus I realize I've been a slave to sin but you've died to set me free to live for you and by your death you've made me a son or daughter of God it's all by your grace thank you that's how you start another question is if you are a true disciple of Jesus maybe you're asking well how do I live out this freedom that Christ has accomplished for us what does that look like how do I do that well just to remind you the freedom with which Jesus has set you free is not a life of independence to do whatever you want it's not freeing you from sin to sin more that doesn't make any sense no Jesus has set us free at the cost of his own blood so that we would live for him the freedom Jesus speaks of is freedom from the penalty and power of sin in order to live for Christ that's the good life life that is the abundant life John 10 10 that is the spirit filled life that is what the Holy Spirit is seeking to accomplish in us think about it if you if you have become a Christian the penalty of your sin has been paid in full by Jesus on that Friday all of God's wrath was poured out on Jesus once and for all done and so there is no penalty of sin past present future hanging over your head there's no condemnation for you but even beyond that God the moment you believed thought he considered all of Christ's obedience as being deposited into your account so not only you are fully forgiven of all your sin you are fully accepted by God on high because you've been given the righteousness of Christ glory glory what a savior you've also been rescued from the power of sin it's been broken Romans 6 makes this beautiful argument because we've been united to death with Christ and his death and resurrection we are no longer slaves to sin but we have been freed to live for God consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God

in Christ Jesus and now present the members of your body to Christ to God as instruments of righteousness that's what we do now and it's not burdensome it is joy to offer myself to God daily for the glory of his name that's freedom that's what you were created for that's what you were redeemed for now there is this thing called the sinful nature that we still deal with as Christians the presence of sin and so your obedience will be contested so our freedom is an exercise of faith where we're saying to temptation you have no dominion over me based on what Jesus has done as we grow in godliness as we bear the fruit of the spirit we will be free indeed we will experience we will be set free and we will know the truth and the truth will set us free and we will know it so for those of you who want some specific steps let me give you two steps step one it's summertime start reading a gospel you've got four

[40 : 39] Matthew Mark Luke and John start reading a gospel daily and before you open up that gospel you just pray out to God you say show me show me the glory of Jesus just light me up start reading just take a chapter a day maybe you're looking for some more specific instruction of Jesus when you hear about Jesus commands it's kind of vague in your mind go to Matthew 5 6 and 7 where Jesus lays out what it looks like his commands for the citizens of his and as you're going through these things step number two is this start telling Jesus how wonderful he is start telling him as you read about him tell him how wonderful he is that there's nobody like him he's glorious back in the 1800s during the

California gold rush prospectors would regularly discover what they thought was gold Eureka they would cry out only to find out that what they had found was fool's gold pyrite often found in the same places it's an imposter gold and so they learned to do tests they learned to do the scratch test and the streak test and the weight test because true gold is weightier than fool's gold so let me ask you is your trust in Jesus your belief in Jesus more like fool's gold or true gold are you ongoingly dependent on Jesus remember his words if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples let's pray

Lord Jesus we're so thankful that you give us the clarity that our hearts long for would you help us to abide in your word for the glory of your name and for the good of others it's in Jesus name we pray!

Amen Thank you.