

Two families

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[0 : 00] Thank you Emma, good morning to you all, it's very good to be with you this morning.

Can I add a welcome along with Chris's and Chris has already prayed so let's go straight! in and look at John 8 together. Here's my question for this morning, will you hold to Jesus's teaching or is your father the devil? It's striking isn't it, shocking the words that Jesus uses here and what is more shocking is who Jesus is talking to. Do you see in verse 31 those who had believed in him. Isn't this why John writes his gospel but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So what is going on? Why is there this shocking conversational ping pong between Jesus and those who believe? This sort of rude rap battle going backwards and forwards. It all starts so promisingly and then starts to go downhill pretty quickly. You see Jesus is telling us that there are two families, two points of humanity. Either you hold on to his teaching or the devil is your father. In this passage those that believe are exposed pretty quickly. Their belief is is fickle, it's superficial, belief that's moulded to suit them. Their faith is on the rocky place. Remember Chris telling us a few weeks ago they're not good soil, rather an attempt to squeeze Jesus into their life where it suits them. But verse 37 tells them there's no room for Jesus's words. Their belief is exposed.

It's exposed straight away. Jesus says, hold on to my teaching. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. And in their answer the Jewish leaders say two things. Immediately they're going on the offensive. We are descendants of Abraham, they say, and we've never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying you will be made free? We are free. We've always been free. We're the descendants of Abraham. That is what they're saying. What are you going on about Jesus? So already they've lost sight of verse 31. They're holding on to their truth. But we need to hold on to Jesus's truth to be his disciples. It's the truth that runs all the way through this passage. It's the truth that shows that we're either slaves or we're free. And the truth that tells us we are children of God, God is our father, or the father of lies, the devil is our father. So let's unpack these a little further together.

[3 : 08] Slave versus free. If we follow this section, verse 31 to 36, we can apply three things. Firstly, we think we are free. Secondly, Jesus says we're not free. We're slaves to sin. Finally, Jesus will set you free. The son will set you free. We think we are free. Jesus says we're not free.

We think we're free. We're free to do whatever we want. Isn't that what the world, our culture says? The Rolling Stones sang, I'm free to do what I want any old time. It's an attractive thought, isn't it? To be free to do what you want. Free to choose. Free from controlling anything, from anything controlling us. Freedom to be who you want to be. Decide who you are. Jesus is offering freedom, but it does not seem to be quite the same as the Rolling Stones version. If you hold to my teaching, abide in me, continue in my word, follow in my truth, my way, then you will be my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. This seems a bit more contradictory. Freedom, having to follow someone.

Freedom is following myself, surely. Holding to teaching. What you're offering is restrictive. It's a loss of my autonomy, my independence. We don't like this. And they don't like it in this passage. Do you notice? Verse 33, we don't need you to be free, Jesus. We're the offspring of Abraham. We've never been slaves. We are free, thank you very much. They disagree. And then we get this argument.

[5 : 04] They say they've never been slaves. This is wrong. If you know about the history of Israel, you'll know what a astonishing claim this is. Look back through history. There's scarcely been a time when God's chosen people have not been slaves to someone. Slaves under Pharaoh, David the Philistines, exile in Babylon. And pick a page. The chance is that one way or another they have been oppressed or enslaved. They must have known that. So this freedom they're claiming is sort

of defiance. We don't need anyone's help. We'll choose our own path. Thank you. Well, Jesus says we're not free. He repeats his message.

You're not as free as you think. If you sin, then you've been trapped in that. Jesus is tackling this head on. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Verse 34, we're slaves to sin. What do you think about that?

It's pretty devastating. Maybe we think slavery is a language of the past. Nobody likes to be called a sinner. As the phrase goes, no amount of contrary evidence seems to disturb humanity's good opinion of itself.

We think we're good. Perhaps we think this isn't really relevant for us. But this is a different kind of freedom that Jesus is offering. And it's a different kind of slavery from our cultural understanding. To be a slave means to have a master. We turn away from God, that is sin, and we turn to other masters. So we need to ask ourselves, who is the master of our lives? What is it that controls us? [6:53] We all live for something, whether that is work or love or family, career maybe. That is what controls you. We think we're free, but something will control us. We'll constantly be striving to please a master that will never satisfy. A desire to be liked, perhaps. To want more. All these become our masters.

Why do we let our desires control us? Because they are our master. Maybe your ego is your master. You think you could do it on your own. Jesus says, unless I am Lord, you are not free. The Son will set you free. So true freedom is a person. The truth is found in Jesus, and he will make you free. Jesus says, if you live for me, I will set you free.

So how does Jesus bring about freedom? Well, have a look with me at verse 35. Here is the answer. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. Do you get this? Some of us are filled with anxiety or worry, because we live like a slave. We never know we're going to be thrown out of the household. If we live for our career, but we lose our job. [8:17] If we try to please everyone, but we upset somebody. We're trying to please masters, but we don't know where we stand. It's permanently anxiety inducing. Permanent worry. Where are we? Where do we stand?

But the Son, the Son knows where he belongs. In Jesus, we know where we belong. There is nothing we can do to earn it. He loves us unconditionally. We are one of God's children. So you can deal with all that is behind you, all that is past. Because in the Bible, you know, it says your sin will find you out. Not that someone else will find it, but your sin will find you out. And that's a terrible thing to live with, with sin, with that guilt and anxiety. We all have a conscience. There's no absolute freedom from conscience. But in the Son, you are free. Do you remember back in the start of John, John 1, verse 12, To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the rights to become children of God.

Do you struggle with the past, what's behind you? God loves you completely. The Son has died for you to put away the dead of sin, and now all of God's condemnation falls on Christ. [9:43] We just sang it, for the sinless saviour died. The sinful soul will be free. Jesus has paid it. This is wonderful news for today.

We are adopted into his family. We're his children. We're loved unconditionally. And with Jesus in control, as our master, we're free. Free from sin. Free from guilt. Free from all those voices. Free from all the worry. We are free indeed. This is the teaching to hold on to. Well, maybe you know people who say that freedom is doing what you want to do, to choose what we want to do. Well, this doesn't work. Let me give you a trite example. I love coffee. But if I had sort of 20 cups a day, it just wouldn't work. It's going to have an impact on me. Impact on my body. I can't just do what I want to do.

I can't pursue every desire I have. I need to hold on to Jesus' teachings. Why? Because freedom is doing what I was made to do.

[10:49] God has designed me. He created me. He created you. He made you with love and compassion. And when you see that, you obey.

You hold to the teaching. You get freedom. If I had a Lego kit and I threw away the instructions, it'd be pretty hard to build what the designer had intended. We need to hold on to Jesus' teachings. God made us. He's the designer. And he knows what is good for us. Freedom is not doing what we want any old time. Freedom is doing what God has made us to do.

And he made us to obey, to abide in his word, to follow Jesus. Jesus says, like a son, you are loved unconditionally. And you are free. So this is the teaching to hold on to this morning.

The truth tells us we're a slave to sin. Or we are free. The truth also tells us in this passage that we're children of God.

[11:50] Or the devil is our father. The father of truth. Or the father of light. Let's look at this passage. See what Jesus says to the Jews. Abraham is our father, they say.

But you're not doing what Abraham did, says Jesus. You're doing what your father does. They kind of miss that. We have one father, God himself, they say.

You are from your father, the devil, Jesus says. You're the one whose demon possessed, Jesus.

Can you see how they go backwards and forwards? They claim the opposite about each other.

They say they have God on their side. Jesus says, no, Abraham and God are on my side. So who is right? Who is the son of God? An offspring of Satan. Well, Jesus says, if you were Abraham's children, you'd be doing what Abraham did.

There'd be a likeness. I'd expect you to trust teaching from God when you hear it, when I tell you.

But what's their reaction? That's not their reaction. They're trying to kill Jesus.

[12:52] This is not like Abraham. Where's the family likeness? If you're Abraham's children. This is what Jesus is saying. There would be a likeness. If God were your father, you would love me.

Jesus shows he's one with God. The father sent the son. If you've seen me, you've seen the father.

So if you claim to be God's side and not my side, then that doesn't really work.

God and Jesus are one. You don't feel the same way about me as your father does. Maybe you know some people, you've had some conversation with people who say they're quite spiritual.

Or they believe in God. But they don't follow Jesus' words. You might have friends that seem so very in touch with God. But they don't love Jesus.

They don't hold on to his words. Because Jesus tells us, if you reject me, you're not on God the father's side. He and the father are one. So there are these two families.

[13:57] Either we hold to Jesus' teachings, as he is the son of God, or the devil is our father. It's so striking, isn't it? The principle that Jesus is articulating. It's just as hated today as it was then.

The response is full of hostility today as it was then. The principle is that there's two families.

There's no in between. You can't lead a life for yourself and have a bit of God.

The lines are distinct. There are two families. One under the power of a personal God. One under the forces of darkness and evil. And we're all in the latter until we're radically changed and transformed by new birth.

In the passage, they don't like it. They call Jesus Samaritan, like a racial slur. You have a demon.

Well, Jesus' teachings cuts through all our sort of cultural positions.

Maybe we see race or class or wealth as dividing lines. Well, we're multicultural. And yet this passage helps us get to grips with the fact that what really determines who we are and the decisions we make is who our father is.

[15:07] The father of truth or the father of lies. If you look around, just look around in the room. It's wonderful, isn't it, to be church family. But what unites us is not race or class or wealth.

What unites us is not our privileged position. It's that we know God, his glory, his splendour, his grace. We know our sovereign creator. So when we give money, when we don't have much, it doesn't really make sense to the world.

If we stay celibate before we're married, the world thinks we're mad. The truth we receive is from Christ. We hold on to his teachings, abide in him, carry on in his word, follow him.

It's not from culture. The truth is there are two personal supernatural beings. This sounds shocking, but the Jews at the time needed to hear that and we need to hear it too.

There are two things about the devil. He's a murderer and a liar. The devil is a liar, the father of lies. His way of operating is through lies. Lies in the heart.

[16:18] Here's prince of the world filling our hearts and minds with lies. When we get a bit older, we look back and we remember words that hurt us. Words from when we were younger.

Or think, if God loved me, then that wouldn't have happened. Why did that happen? They're lies and they control us. And if you continue in these lies, it's very hard to see the truth.

The Jews don't see the truth because they rejected Jesus. They couldn't bear to hear the life-giving words of Jesus. They end up throwing stones, doing exactly what Jesus said they would.

So how do we deal with the devil? Christ says, continue in my word. What did he do when he was faced with the devil?

He used scripture. He knew God's word. What are we afraid of here this morning? Deal with the liar and seek with the truth found in Jesus, found in his words.

[17 : 14] It's not easy, but that's why we're encouraged to attend prayer meetings grounded in scripture. To study groups grounded in scripture. Emails from Chris that are grounded in scripture.

Obey it. Abide in it. If God is your father, you hear his words. Verse 47. What is the glorious result? Verse 51. Look with me. Whoever keeps my word will never see death. Many think that Jesus is restrictive. But when we think of the resurrection and glory, all our lies, our brokenness, our hardships are shattered by the glory of God.

Who turns our pain into everlasting life. And we will say, yes, God is our father because he and he alone will give us life. Do you notice what Jesus said about Abraham?

Verse 56. Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. What does that mean? Well, Paul tells us when Abraham believed, it was credited to him as righteousness.

[18 : 21] It was given to him immediately, straight away, on the spot. When Abraham rejoiced, knowing Jesus was the son of God who would descend to earth to die and pay for our sins, he was accepted on the spot.

He did not do anything. We cannot add anything. No heritage, no effort, no position in society. It doesn't matter that our parents are Christians. It matters that we are loved unconditionally and accepted into Christ's family.

Not because of what we have done, but through Christ. Do you sometimes feel like a failure?

Perhaps you've come here this morning with a feeling of just not quite getting it right with God this week, of losing the battle.

The number one lie is that we're not accepted by God because we have failed. Like Abraham, we need to rejoice to see Jesus' day.

When we move from slavery unto sin to God's family. When we see what Jesus has done for us and we treat him as the great I am. Before Abraham was, I am.

[19 : 25] Jesus is claiming to be the creator God. What do we do with this? Well, God's word is here to humble us, to come to Jesus and say, your teaching is hard.

But I am a slave to sin and I need to be set free. We're brought into freedom as children of God. So hold on to him. Listen to him. We naturally read this and say, we don't want to be like these guys. Jesus, you are the son of God. Let me obey your word. Let me hold on to your teaching, even though that's really tough. If you're here and you think you don't want to hear that from Jesus, you are in dangerous territory.

That's what they said. Whose family are you in? Jesus has eternal life and he comes from God. Hold on to truth about nature and what Jesus offers.

Anyone who hears is set free. Isn't that wonderful? Paul, this is the son who goes to death on the cross that we might have life. So verse 51 is your outbox for today.

[20 : 32] This is your takeaway. There's a warning on the other side. But look at the glorious reality that fits all we've seen in John's gospel. It fits with the verses that we said at the start. Go to John 20.

The positive, yes. Jesus, you are the one who sets me free. You died as a slave that I might be free and never see death.

And this is the son of God doing that. Can we say that this morning? You are my God, my absolute Lord. I see that you died for me. I take your truth into my life and base my whole life in it.

Let's renew our commitment to the truth. To believe it. To study it. To obey it. Abide in it. You will be free indeed.

Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, thank you for your teaching to us. Help us to hold on to it when things are difficult.

[21 : 36] To know that you are the Father of truth. That all the mess in our lives was placed upon Jesus. That he died for us.

Help us to trust in the truth. To trust in the Father of truth. To know that you have set us free. In your name we pray.

Amen.