

Jesus vs. the Devil's Children

John 8:31-59

Warm-up Question: What mannerisms or habits have you noticed that you have picked up from your mom and dad?

³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

³³ They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" ³⁴ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. ³⁸ I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.]" ³⁹ "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.

⁴¹ You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? ⁴⁷ He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God" (John 8:31-47).

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?" ⁴⁹ "I am not possessed by a demon," said Jesus, "but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Very truly I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death." ⁵² At this they exclaimed, "Now

we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" ⁵⁴ Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷ "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" ⁵⁸ "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Holding onto His Word

We are continuing on in the conversation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders at the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews were upset with Christ after He had said that He was the Light of the World in John 8:12. They understood that this was a claim of divinity by Jesus for God had revealed that He was their Light in the darkness (See the last study, John 8:12-30). Verse 30 tells us that many who were listening put their faith in Him after hearing His gracious words. To those who believed, He said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (verses 31-32). In this passage the Lord makes it very clear that disciples are those that hold to His teaching. There are many today that try to be disciples, but ignore the teaching of Jesus and have no time to meditate on His words or works. There is a very real danger to the people of God when we do not listen or take heed to the words of Christ's instruction. Let me illustrate what I mean:

After I married my wife, Sandy, here in the USA, we lived in the States for about a year before we left for England, sensing that God wanted to train us and use us for His kingdom purposes. I returned to work as a commercial fisherman with my dad. It was winter time and I had to leave Sandy at home while we were working out

of the port of Boston in Lincolnshire, about a four hour drive by car from our home port of Harwich, Essex. We left our boats up there and would work and live on the boats for 12 days and then come home for two days. When the government said that the quota for herring was filled, we could no longer legally catch herring so we had to sail our boats south along the coast toward home. My dad was on first watch and he steered for the first four hours or so. It was past midnight and it was his turn to sleep. He told me that before I came up to the two sandbanks off of Lowestoft that ran parallel with the coast, the Outer and Inner Scroby Sands, he wanted me to go close to the shore to escape the tide that would turn and be against us by that time. That way we would increase our speed if we were not going against so much tide. We were following another fishing boat that was about two miles ahead of us. All I could see of the boat ahead was his stern (rear) light, a single white colored light. When I came up to the Scroby Sands, the Outer and Inner banks, I reasoned to myself that I could just follow the other boat that was going in between the two sands instead of following my father's instructions. There was a force 9 gale at the time, so the boat was being buffeted badly and the waves were breaking over the boat, diminishing my visibility. I was afraid that if I heeded the words of my father and stayed close to the shore, I would run into Lowestoft pier that I knew stuck out a few hundred yards. I reasoned that my dad would sleep for a few hours yet and wouldn't even know that I had disobeyed his instructions. I decided to follow the light of the other boat through the channel inbetween the sands just like the other boat and ignore the voice of my father.

What I didn't realize was that after the other boat had gone through the sands, he had turned his course and was now heading inshore to escape the worst of the tide. Due to following others instead of listening to my father's word, I was now headed on a different course that would take me on a collision course toward the Inner Scroby Sands. Our boat hit the sandbank at full speed. My dad woke with a start as the keel (The very bottom and centerline of a boat running fore and aft; the backbone of a vessel.) went up on the sand and was stuck fast on the sand in a severe gale. Worst of all, the tide was going down and every minute our chance of survival diminished. My dad told me to put the engine in reverse and give maximum thrust on the engine in the hope of getting off the sand before we keeled over. With only one keel the boat would roll over as the tide went

down. As I put the engine in reverse, the boat leaned over and nearly capsized. In fear, I took the engine out of gear resulting in the boat becoming stable again. Dad said, "Do it, son!" Again, I put the gear stick in reverse and pulled back on the throttle giving the engine maximum revs. The boat leaned over again as things fell off the side of the wheelhouse while I tried to maintain my balance. I pulled the gear stick into neutral being afraid to die. My dad said, "Let me have the controls, son." I gladly got out of the way and let my dad take over the steering wheel and throttle. I was just a young Christian at the time and knew enough to pray, knowing that we were close to death. We were three miles off the coast, in mid winter, and it was past midnight in severe gale (Around 55 MPH) wind speeds and rough seas. If the boat went over, I knew we would die—we carried no life vests and no life raft. We would not be found in the dark and the cold water would give us only minutes before hypothermia would set in. I began praying like there was no tomorrow, and tomorrow seemed very distant suddenly as my father took the controls and went full throttle in reverse. The boat nearly went over again as I prayed for God to help us. There was a big bump and then two or three more as the back end of the keel dug into the sand and slowly slipped off of the sands. What relief flooded my soul as I thanked God for His deliverance. As we got back onto course and the danger subsided, God spoke to me very clearly saying, "If you would only listen to your Father's voice, you would be safe." Sometimes God speaks to us on two levels, and this was one of those times. I knew He was referring to my relationship with Him. My problem came about because I didn't listen to my father's voice. Can I challenge you to trust your Father's voice? When the situation looks bleak, hear His voice saying, "Don't be afraid. Just trust me, let me steer your vessel."

I am grateful that in whatever situation we are in, we can hand over the controls to our Father and let Him step in and say to us, "my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:8). There are times in one's life when we must simply trust our Father. This can be difficult when we are going through a trying situation. Sometimes it means ignoring everything but His words in the midst of a storm and crying out to Him for His help.

Our text today begins with Jesus telling those who are listening to Him, that if they would listen to His teaching, they would know the truth and that truth would

keep them in life and set them free from slavery. The idea here is that if we will commit ourselves to walk our lives out in obedience to the revelation of who Jesus is and what He has done for us, the truth of God's Word will set us free from slavery to sin.

Share an example of a time when you ignored your parent's voice or Christ's instruction. What was the result of ignoring their words?

What do you think Jesus is referring to when He talks about knowing the truth that will set people free? (Verse 31). What do you think He means by the word "truth?"

Slaves to Sin

The Jews failed to understand that Jesus was talking in spiritual terms when He said that they could be set free from slavery. They went off on a tangent about the Jewish people having never been slaves to anyone, which was completely untrue, they had been enslaved by Egypt before Moses came along, and at that very time they were under subjugation by Rome. Jesus homed in on their hearts, saying, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin" (verse 34). What He means is that sin has an addictive power over us that refuses to release us once it gets its hooks into us. Let me illustrate what I mean with another story from my past:

When I was sixteen years of age and very impressionable, I was working on a cruise liner with about 200 people on the crew. We cruised to Norway and Denmark, France, Spain, Gibraltar and North Africa, the ports of Tangiers and Casablanca. While on one of the cruises to North Africa, I had a longing to become part of the in-crowd and enjoyed hanging out and drinking with the other young men. One evening, a marijuana cigarette was passed around. I took it and thought that I would try it and see how it would make me feel. After a few puffs I passed it on. I didn't notice that I felt any different, but I did feel like I had become part of the in-crowd of the crew. I was warned by my grandma to never take drugs and was fearful of the consequences, but sin also has a deceiving aspect to it. I quieted my conscience by telling myself that the marijuana didn't affect me for some reason. Everything went okay until one night I gave myself completely to it and was hooked. From that point on, my life took a downward direction into real bondage to marijuana lasting around nine years of my life. I lost all self-esteem and couldn't

bear to look at myself in the mirror. Every time I did, I saw myself as a "junkie." I tried to break the habit several times by throwing away the marijuana in the sea, but just went back to it the next day. It had a real hold on me and ruled over everything I did. My enslavement was broken at the feet of Jesus when I gave my life to Him. From that point on I have not touched any marijuana; the Lord completely delivered me from my drug taking. Jesus said that, 36So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (verse 36).

I hope that you have not gone down that road and that it is different for you, but the chances are that many of you reading these words have been, or are addicted to alcohol, lying, cheating, or stealing. Your sin may not be as obvious as those things, but what about bad temper, envy, arrogance, lust, or pornography, sexual immorality, slander, gossip, pride, slander or even fear, fear of death, fear of a parent, fear of your boss? All of these things have an addictive power over us and can be overcome by the power of Jesus. Bring them to the foot of the cross and have Christ set you free. Are you tired of carrying your sin? The consequences of sin are hidden from us with the temptation, it is only later that the full bite of sin takes effect in our lives:

Without being too vulnerable, are you able to share something in your past that did get a hold on you and brought you into slavery to sin? How did you get set free? Try to keep it to just three or four minutes each person.

A workman on a road construction crew told this story of a time when he was working on a project deep in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Every morning as he drove to work in his pickup, he would see a young boy at a fishing hole near the road. He would wave and speak to the boy each day. One day, however, as he drove slowly past the fishing spot and asked how the boy was doing, he got a strange reply: "The fish aren't biting today, but the worms sure are."

When he pulled into the local gas station down the road a few minutes later, he jokingly related the boy's comment to the attendant. For a moment the man laughed, but then a look of horror crossed his face, and without another word he ran to his truck, jumped in, and drove hurriedly away.

Later that day, the man on the construction crew found out what had happened. The gas station attendant had arrived on the scene too late to save the boy, who had

somehow mistaken a nest of baby rattlesnakes for earthworms and had been bitten to death.

Baby rattlesnakes, you see, are born with their full venom. And so it is with many of the sins that tempt us. They may appear harmless in the beginning, yet they contain the full venom of Satan's poison and will destroy us if we handle them.¹

The Children of the Devil

There is a prevailing philosophy in our day that God is the Father of all mankind. In a sense that is true in that He created our physical bodies and has given us a spirit, mind, will and emotions, but it is not true that He is our Father until we are born again (John 3:3). Jesus says that there are two kinds of people in this world, those who are on His side and those who belong to the devil, are deceived by him, and do his work:

“He who is **not with me is against me**, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Matthew 12:30).

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live **when you followed the ways of this world** and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, **the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient**” (Ephesians 2:1-2).

These men that were arguing with Jesus were saying that their father was Abraham, insinuating their belief that He was born illegitimately and probably was a Samaritan, since they had no evidence as to who was His father—they had probably found out that Mary was carrying Him before marriage to Joseph, her husband. They said to Him, “Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed? (verse 48).

He told them straight out, “you belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire” (verse 44). Because their lives were dominated by sin, the outflow of their lives, the words and actions that sprang from them showed that they were wholly owned by Satan.

¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.¹⁸

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:16-18).

In the beginning warm-up question, we talked about how many of us, almost without thinking about it, do things that our parents habitually did. Many times we often look like them. We, the children, are the image of our parents. If Satan is the owner and operator of your heart, the outflow of your life will be in opposition to Christ. Sure, we will continue to sin even though we are Christians. We won't be completely free of sin until Jesus comes, but it will not continue to be habitual sin. Sin will no longer rule over you if you have the Spirit of God and walk in obedience to Him (1 John 3:6). There will be a battle within as to who you will listen to—Christ or Satan. The fruit of your life will tell others as to who has gained your allegiance, Satan or God. The worst part is that many times we cannot see ourselves as other people see us. Sin is so deceitful. Many even go through an inward spiritual battle when it comes to seeking the truth in God's Word. There is a spiritual opposition to walking in the truth, prayer and walking with Christ in humble obedience.

Christ was faithful to tell them exactly what He saw, “you are of your father, the devil.” Sometimes the truth must be clearly spoken in order that we may awaken people from the slumber of spiritual death. There are those that say we should not wake up people and say hard things to hurt their feelings about their sins. I do not agree. I am responsible to tell you the truth as to what I see in the scriptures. If Jesus spoke plainly about where He saw men heading, then so should we.

Who comes to mind in your family or friendship network that exhibit behavior showing that they are in bondage to Satan? You don't have to name them. How did they get into that condition? We will pray for them at the end.

The Great I Am

I love the fact that God is not willing that any should perish but wants everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus tries one more time to reach them in the hope that they would listen to His Word. He said, “I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death” (John 8:51). Instead, He is shut down with thinking that is bound only to this world, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps

¹ 1500 illustrations for Biblical Preaching, Edited by Michael Green, Published by Baker Book House, Page 338.

your word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham?...Who do you think you are? (Verses 52-53).

Jesus replied saying, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad” (verse 56). Some would say that we should interpret this as saying that when Abraham was alive on earth he looked forward to the day when His Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be born in Bethlehem (Genesis 26:4). Personally, I think that it should be interpreted that Abraham in heaven rejoiced along with the angels at sending off the Lord Jesus Christ to be born into the world through Mary. The Jews again thought he was thinking in earthly terms saying that at the very outside Jesus could be only 50 years old, and yet Abraham lived and died more than 2000 years earlier. How is it possible that Jesus could have seen Abraham? But Abraham was not dead but very much alive! Christ had told them that God was not the God of the dead but of the living:

‘I am the God of **Abraham**, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matthew 22:32).

Abraham was very much alive when Christ left heaven to come to earth, and so will each of us be if we have trusted in Christ.

Christ then uttered a very profound statement that angered His listeners to the core of their beings. He told them that, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (verse 58).

What got them so riled up that they picked up stones to stone Him (kill Him by hitting Him with stones)?

At the burning bush, when God spoke to Moses, telling him that He was sending him to the Israelites in Egypt to deliver them out of the slavery of Egypt, Moses asked God who he shall say was sending him. God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14). In verses 56-59, John describes the scene where the religious leaders thought they had caught Him in a lie when He told them that He had seen Abraham. John writes:

⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing

my day; he saw it and was glad.”⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”⁵⁸ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “**before Abraham was born, I am!**”⁵⁹ At this, **they picked up stones to stone him**, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds (John 8:56-59).

He didn’t say, “Before Abraham was born, I was”, or “before Abraham was, I already existed.” No, instead He deliberately used the same name of God spoken to Moses but translated into Greek, EGO AMI, the name by which God had revealed Himself to the Israelites, the Great I AM. Notice how they responded to this statement. They took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy, because He was claiming to be God. This is an important truth for us to understand because of the statement of Christ just a few verses earlier in John 8:24, where Jesus said: “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am (the one I claim to be), you will indeed die in your sins” (John 8:24). Notice that in most translations, the words “**the one I claim to be**” is in parenthesis. Why did the editors put those words in parenthesis? Because it is not in the original text! It has been added to help us understand the text. It puts a different emphasis on the passage entirely, doesn’t it? Jesus is clearly saying that redemption comes only as we get a true picture of just who He is—the Divine Son of God, the great I AM. His meaning is clear. Eternal life hinges on an understanding of who He is. If He is only a man, then His death would have done nothing for us. But the fact is that God came to us as the great deliverer of slavery to sin, and it could only be accomplished by God Himself. That’s why His Name is Jesus, which means YHWH saves. Instead, the greatest truth we must start with is the fact that He is the great “I AM” the way, the truth and the life. He isn’t a way, He is The Way! The Truth, and The Life!

What Does the Name I Am That I Am Mean?

I Am that I Am (Hebrew: **אֲנִי הָיָה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּהּ**, pronounced Ehyeh asher ehyeh is a common English translation (King James Bible and others) of the response God used when Moses asked for His name (Exodus 3:14). It is one of the most famous verses in the Old Testament. Hayah means “existed” or “was” in Hebrew; “ehyeh” is the first person singular imperfect form. Ehyeh asher ehyeh is generally interpreted to mean I am that I am, though it literally translates as “I-shall-be that I-shall-be.” Jesus is the pre-existent One, the God of all creation, the divine I Am, the self-existent one that is ev-

everything that you need Him to be.

How do you need the Great “I Am” to come alongside you today? He is all you need Him to be. Whatever you are in bondage to, He wants to set you free. He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). How about it? Why don’t you call on Him and lay your burden of sin at His feet.

For those of you that are in groups, why don’t you

close the group with a time of prayer for those friends and relatives that we mentioned in our discussion time? Pray that God will open their hearts to His Word.

Prayer: Father, thank you for sending your Son into the world to release us from our slavery to sin. We pray for our friends and relatives that are still in pain due to carrying the heavy load of addictions and sins. Open their hearts to your love, please Lord, Amen!