



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA  
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# The Gospel of John

## True Disciples – True Freedom

### John 8:31-36

**Related Topics:** Discipleship; Abiding in the Word; Knowing the Truth; Freedom; Slaves to Sin; Pride; The Condition of Sin; Jesus: The Source of True Freedom

**The 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of John’s Gospel has been PACKED with profound and powerful events and truth. It is filled with Jesus making radical claims and the ensuing conflicts.** Remember the chapter follows the Feast of Booths. The chapter began with the account of the Jesus teaching in the Temple precincts. His teaching was disrupted when the religious leaders dragged through the crowd a woman that had been caught in the very act of adultery.

*“they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup>Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” <sup>6</sup>This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.*

Jesus dealt with her accusers and then He addressed her —

*<sup>10</sup>Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup>She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”*

Many like to think that point of this event is to let us know that Jesus is the champion of the victim — ready to give a sinner a break. But that is not what the event teaches us about Jesus. Jesus could let her go without invoking the Old Testament penalty of death — without violating Old Testament law — because the penalty of death would be exacted! Her sin will be punished with death — But

not her own death. Jesus is punished in her place. **Penal Substitutionary Atonement!**

*Isaiah 53:5* But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

*2 Corinthians 5:21* For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

In **Verse 12** we then came to one of the seven I AM statements of Jesus

*John 8:12 ....“I am the light of the world.*

We made a broad study of the theme and concept of light, and the contrast between light and darkness in the Scriptures.

Jesus declared that HE is — in and of Himself — the one who gives the LIGHT of the presence of God. Jesus not only says that He is — in and of Himself — the source of LIGHT in this dark world; He says that the ONLY way to EXPERIENCE that Light and BE in that light is to **Follow HIM!**

*John 8:12 ....Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

We spent one Sunday considering what it means to **follow** Jesus. Last Sunday we studied **THE RESPONSE OF THE CROWD.**

The Pharisees didn't like **the tone of authority** in the words of Jesus — So they challenged His authority. They attempted to invalidate the authority of His words by claiming that Jesus was bearing witness of Himself (*Deuteronomy 19:15*).

Jesus responded by bringing God the Father forward as a corroborating witness — the Sent One calls on the Sender. They refused to acknowledge the God of Israel as the Father of Jesus. Jesus said that they would die in the SINGULAR SIN of rejecting Him as the Son of God and Messiah of Israel.

*<sup>21</sup>So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.”*

He went even further by saying

*<sup>24</sup>I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that **I am** (he) you will die in your sins.”*

*Unless you recognize Me as God — And bring your sin into the light of who I am — and into the light of my nature as messiah and redeemer — you will die in your sin.*

After these words of Jesus we see saw that a lot of people — powerful and influential RELIGIOUS people — reject the Light of the World . They hate Jesus for what He has to say. They are opposing Jesus because Jesus has called them into his light so that their darkness would be exposed.

**In the face of this rejection John left us with some words that give us a glimmer of hope —**

**<sup>30</sup>As he was saying these things, many believed in him.**

While the religious movers and shakers were rejecting Jesus — There were people listening in on this whole exchange who said —

**It’s here that we pick up this morning —**

**<sup>31</sup>So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him,**

For those who believed what Jesus had to say — Jesus gives this awesome promise

**“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**

We are going to spend our time this morning looking at two things — TRUE DISCIPLES and TRUE FREEDOM.

**“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,**

Jesus said that there is something that defines an individual as a TRUE DISCIPLE — *If you **abide in my word.***

**QUOTE:** William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John volume 1

*Discipleship begins with belief.*

Discipleship begins with belief. But it doesn't end there. It consists in **abiding** in the Word.

**HUGE QUESTION:** What does it mean to ABIDE in the Words of Jesus? The Greek word here is  $\mu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\mu\epsilon$  **meno**. Here is what the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (also referred to as BDAG) — has to say about this Greek word, **meno**

= **Remain, Stay, Luke 19:5** *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must **stay** at your house today."*

= **Dwell** — In **John 1:38** we are told that John and Andrew asked Jesus *"where are you staying — (**meno**) — abiding or living?"*

So a **true disciple** is one who REMAINS and STAYS in the Word, like one would STAY in the house. A **true disciple** is one who LIVES in the Word as if it were his home! Being a TRUE DISCIPLE involves remaining in the place of listening to the Word of Jesus — living in the word of Jesus. To be a TRUE DISCIPLE means that we have a continuing — on-going relationship with Jesus — in which we come under his instruction and we sit in it and we steep in it!

**Such an approach to living is inextricably bound up in the term DISCIPLE.**  
The Greek word for disciple is  $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\acute{\eta}\varsigma$  **mathētēs** (mah-thae-tase)

**DISCIPLE** (*mathētēs*) is literally — **the learner**. A disciple does not merely believe — a disciple is someone who is constantly learning from Jesus. As we read the New Testament we find that a disciple was more than a mere pupil or learner. A disciple was an **adherent** who accepts the instruction given to him and makes it his rule of conduct

**EXAMPLE** — there were the disciples of John (Matt. 11:2; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; 7:18; John 3:25)

**EXAMPLE** — there were the disciples of the Pharisees (Mark 2:18).

**EXAMPLE** — In John 9:28, the Pharisees told the healed blind man, "Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples."

So Jesus says that the **true disciple** did not merely believe — but also made His teaching the basis of their conduct.

**QUOTE: William Barclay** — *The disciple is the learner who learns in order to do. The truth which Jesus brought is designed for action.*

**BIG IDEA HERE** — Christians are to **remain, stay** and **dwell** in the Word of Jesus — not simply for academic satisfaction or for intellectual appreciation, but in order to find out what God wishes us to do — and then doing it!

**Jesus said that true discipleship RESULTS in knowledge of the truth.**

**“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth,**

To **remain** in the words of Jesus; **live** in the words of Jesus; is what makes one a **true learner/disciple** of Jesus. To learn from — the truth teller in a world of lies — is to learn **the truth**.

A few thoughts on **the truth** —

1.) Many *philosophies ideologies* claim to be based on truth — but the truth Jesus is speaking of here is not intellectual assent to some philosophical proposition. It is trust **in Jesus Himself** who said — *“I am the way, the **truth**, and the life.”*

2.) The Word of God does not claim to *just contain* truth, but **is truth**; It is not simply **true**, but **is truth itself!** The bible itself is the **final standard** of truth. In **John 17:17** Jesus doesn't say — *Your word is **true***. He says — *Your word is **truth***.

Once again we find that Christianity really is ALL ABOUT JESUS! It is only in the truth of Jesus we see God for Who He truly is. It is only in the truth of Jesus we see this world for what it really is. It is only in the truth of Jesus we see ourselves for who we really are. It is only in the truth of Jesus we see what things are of real value, eternal value. It is only in the truth of Jesus we see what is right and what is wrong; what is truly good or truly bad. It is only in the truth of Jesus we see what things are really important and what things are not.

**APPLICATION** — Most every professed believer has, at one time or another, slipped into a certain pattern in their spiritual life. Jesus will blow your mind with some truth or some passage of Scripture. You'll be so stoked about it — it will make so much sense of your life — it will bring such clarity to a situation or relationship. You have an almost euphoric rush because of that truth. **But you don't continue it. You don't abide in it.** Not long after you cycle back down to where you began before that incredible learning moment! Life for a lot of Christians ends up being a series of emotional highs and lows — peaks and valleys. Their Christian life is a continual cycle of God speaking to them and teaching them something — and them failing to **live in it** — and then running back in that cycle over and over and over.

Jesus says that the key to being a **TRUE DISCIPLE** is **to continue**. When Jesus teaches you something — remain in it, live in it. One guy called it “A long obedience in the same direction.”

**THAT is true discipleship — and Jesus said that true discipleship RESULTS in knowledge of the truth — and then He said**

**<sup>32</sup> ...and the truth will set you free.”**

He says that a **true disciple** remains in/lives in His Word — and as a result of being a **true disciple** you come to **knowledge of the truth**. And as a result of knowing the truth, freedom will be yours as a gift — you experience **TRUE FREEDOM**.

One of this world's highest virtues, noblest values and greatest desires, is freedom. The amazing thing is that the world has **NO IDEA** what freedom really is. Apart from the truth of Scripture we have no concept of what freedom is. We tend to think of freedom as being free from rules or standards that might prevent us from doing whatever feels good. Jesus — the Truth-Teller in a world of lies — is going to tell us that **TRUE FREEDOM** involves two things — It involves God freeing us from one thing so that you can be free to the right thing.

**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?’”**

Some wonder if the **THEY** of this verse are the **MANY** of Verse 30 — the **BELIEVERS** of Verse 31.

**Warren Wiersbe** — whom I greatly respect as a commentator, said — *It is not likely that the pronoun they refers to these new believers, for they would probably not argue with their Savior.*

Imagine that — a believer arguing with the Lord! Besides myself — I know that the apostle Peter argued with the Lord at least 4 times that I can think of! AT Caesarea Philippi; twice at the last supper (feet washing and denial); and in **Acts 10**. There Peter was on the roof top of the Simon the Tanner's house. The Lord told Peter to eat non-kosher food. Peter said — **NOT SO LORD** — *I've never eaten anything unclean!*

Listen to how the Greek Scholar A.T. Robertson reads the language of Jesus in His comment to those who believed.

**QUOTE: A.T. Robertson** — *Your future loyalty to my teaching will prove the reality of your present profession. Continuance in the word (teaching) proves the sincerity or insincerity of the profession. It is the acid test of life.* Robertson, A. (1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 8:31). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

So as we consider the language of the text — I believe it is possible that some of **these** are from the **MANY** of Verse 30. They have made a profession of faith in Jesus — and at least intellectually — believed that He is indeed *the Light of the World* and that if they *followed Him they would not walk in darkness but have the light of life.*

This moment will show the professed faith of some of the “many” in Verse 30 for what it really was. By addressing the subject of discipleship, truth and freedom — Jesus sheds more light on their hearts — and in so doing elicits an interesting response from a number of them. For some of them it is as if Jesus has just dropped on them **truth** that is a bit hard to get their hearts and minds around — and exposes their pride and resistance to the truth. It is the truth about **real freedom** and the **truth** about being **slaves to sin**.

**“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”**

Jesus says that **True Freedom** comes from **knowing the truth** — from **abiding in his Word**. And immediately their pride — and unbelief in regards to His Word is revealed.

**<sup>33</sup>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’?”**

Wait a minute — we’re descendants of Abraham, we’re Jews. We don’t need any deliverance. When were we ever slaves? We were never in bondage to any man — unless you count that 400 years in Egypt — or Assyria, or Babylon, or Persia! Other than that we’ve never been in bondage to any man. By the way — don’t mind those Roman soldiers you see everywhere. At that very moment they were in bondage to Rome — but could not bring themselves to admit it. **That was their problem.**

They were descendants of Abraham. They had been hand selected by the One, True and Living God to be His chosen people. The One, True and Living God had entrusted THEM with His Law and His Word in the Old Testament Scriptures.

**Why are you talking to US about freedom?**

**BY THE WAY** — This theme of TRUE FREEDOM would have really struck a chord with John’s audience — the Greek culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD — because their great philosophers were always talking about the subject of freedom. The Stoics said — *“Only the wise man is free; the foolish man is a slave.”* Socrates had demanded — *“How can you call a man free when his pleasures rule over him?”*

**So His audience asks — *Why are you talking to US about freedom?***

**<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them,**

So here comes His Word — Here comes the Light of His Word to expose them as something they could not imagine themselves to be — SLAVES!

**“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.**

In Southern California — on the 91 Freeway going towards Riverside there is a dam on the opposite side of the freeway with a big Liberty Bell painted on it along with the words — 1776-1976 200 years of freedom.

But here's the problem — We can live in a "free country" and yet still not have **True Freedom**. The people of **John 8** were the apple of God's eye — and yet they weren't free.

True Freedom is not a matter of political and social liberty (which we should never take for granted). True freedom is not a matter of religious heritage. You can live in the "land of the free and the home of the brave" — you can be a descendant of Abraham, or a descendant of Baptists or Methodists or Presbyterians, or Evangelicals — but **NONE** of that makes you **Truly Free!**

### **“Truly, truly, I say to you**

Here is the Truth-Teller in a world of lies — He is giving them HIS Word. He has said if they would remain in and live in these Word they would be **true disciples** — and **they would know the truth** — and **the truth would make them free!**

### **Everyone who sins is a slave □□□□□□ to sin.**

A.T. Robertson points out that the grammar does not refer to a single act of sin — but rather a continuous habit or practice Robertson, A.  
(1997). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Jn 8:34). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems.

*“Whosoever keeps on practicing sin [literal translation] is the servant □□□□□□ of sin.”*

**And this is the bottom line issue.** Jesus gets right to the point. The issue is the **practice** of sin. The fact that we sin continuously and habitually proves that we are enslaved to **sin**. We spoke about this in the previous section of **John 8**. If you want to prove that you are not in bondage to sin — stop sinning. By **NOT** sinning you can prove that sin is not your master. The excuse — “Well nobody is perfect” only confirms the fact that we are slaves to sin. Nobody is perfect because everybody is a slave to sin. To be a **slave to sin** means that sin owns you — it governs you — it seeks nothing but to abuse you.

**Here is the interesting thing** — When we talk about sin we tend to talk in terms of specific sins — murder, drunkenness, anger, stealing, sexual sin. Those are sins — but those are a by-product of something much deeper. Jesus is addressing the heart of the issue here — He is addressing the condition of sin.

Sin is a condition. It is a state of being. It is a state of being in rebellion against God. It is a state of being obstinate towards God. It is a state of being hard of heart towards God. It's a state of rejecting God's truth. It is the state of being in which we live as if we were God. As D.A Carson puts it — *the root problem is our rebellion against God..... our grotesque de-godding of God.*

**It is out of that state of being that sinful activities, specific sins flow.**

**As descendants of Adam we are born into that state of being! We sin by nature and by choice.** That's why Paul could write in Romans

*Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Jesus said that we are all slaves to sin — slaves to its presence and its power. Those listening to Jesus protested. You may protest. We all protest. We tend to see ourselves as basically good people who occasionally do bad things. We have this estimation of ourselves because we compare ourselves to others. Before I became a Christian people told me I needed to be saved and I would ask them — *Why? I'm a pretty good person. I'm not perfect but I'm not a serial killer either. I'm somewhere between Mother Teresa and Adolf Hitler.*

Jesus says — *No, you're bad people who once in a while do something nice.* And when we do happen to do something good we tell ourselves how good we are and we ruin it with our pride — basically turning that good moment into sin! So we're back to the reality that we are **slaves to sin.**

Again — We are so much like those listening to Jesus! We are great at minimizing our enslavement. "It's not so bad. I just have to make a few adjustments." In fact in our culture "sin" is virtually banned from our vocabulary. Kent Hughes noted that he once heard a TV news commentator refer to a societal sin a "cultural neurosis." Tragically — in contemporary church culture there is a frighteningly insufficient view of sin. It has virtually ignored or redefined the depths of the hold of sin upon us leaving men and women in a theological Disneyland. As a result men and women look at Jesus as a cosmic counselor or therapist prescribing a little "chicken soup for the soul" when needed by way of a Bible verse here and a Bible verse there. In modern Christianity, the great point of faith in Jesus is not **True Freedom** — not to be liberated from the presence and power of sin — it is to the end of personal happiness.

**<sup>35</sup>The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.**

His audience has referenced their relationship to Abraham. Perhaps Jesus talks about the difference between a slave and a son knowing that they would think of Isaac (Abraham's son) and Ishmael (the son of Abraham's slave.) Paul spoke of Isaac and Ishmael in **Galatians 4** and made this statement

*Galatians 4:30* "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman."

The concept of **slave** is so foreign to us — but not to the men and women of **John 8**. They understood this language. They knew that a slave was not a part of the family. They knew that a slave didn't get the family name — couldn't touch the family inheritance. They knew that at any point in time a slave could be cast out and mistreated. But a **son** was completely different. A son was loved. A son was given the family name. A son was beloved by the father. The son is in the house and has access to everything. He can go wherever he wants to go. He can stay as long as he wants to stay. But the slave has no rights. If you are a slave to sin, the son's freedoms are not yours.

Jesus is saying — THAT is what you want. You want a relationship with God whereby He is **your** Father — and He adopts you into his family.

Jesus is essentially telling them that the reason they are slaves is because they are not **sons** of God. He essentially says — Since you are a slave to sin, you are not a child of God.

Sin exists. People are slaves to sin — and as a result they do bad things. I do bad things. What in the world do we do with that problem?

**HUGE** — The conversation shifts from **sin** to **Him**

**<sup>36</sup>So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

**QUOTE:** J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, vol.8 — *Liberty, most Englishmen know, is rightly esteemed one of the highest temporal blessings. Freedom from foreign dominion, a free constitution, free trade, a free press, civil and*

*religious liberty--what a world of meaning lies beneath these phrases! How many would sacrifice life and fortune to maintain the things which they represent! Yet, after all our boasting, there are many so-called freemen who are nothing better than slaves. There are many who are totally ignorant of the highest, purest form of liberty. The noblest liberty is that which is the property of the true Christian. Those only are perfectly free people whom the Son of God "makes free." All else will sooner or later be found slaves.*

**ONLY JESUS CAN GIVE TRUE FREEDOM.** That freedom is a freedom FROM one thing and a freedom TO another.

Jesus frees us **from** the *power of sin* and the *penalty of sin*.

*Romans 8:2* "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus frees from the law of sin and death"

Jesus frees us **to** a life of serving God.

*Romans 6:17-22* <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup>and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup>I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup>But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

The Greek thought was that a man found his true worth only in being conscious of himself and in the free development of his potential. Thus he placed great value on the right to be **independent of others** and **to live just as he pleased**. The Greek felt only revulsion and contempt for the position of a slave — the *doulos* — because the slave was **subordinate** and **dependent**. His position was looked upon with contempt. You see the *doulos* belongs by nature not to himself, but to someone else. To the Greek that was awful.

But the early Christians understood that they had BEEN SLAVES of SIN. But Jesus had set them FREE! They saw themselves not as set free to live for

themselves. They saw themselves set free to SERVE their Savior. In that light the concept of Doulos became something wonderful

The apostles — Paul; Peter; James; Jude — all used the word in reference to themselves. They called themselves the doulos — the **bondslaves of Christ!** They saw it as an honored and privileged position. They saw themselves as belonging lock, stock and barrel to the Lord.

**QUOTE: J.C. Ryle** — *Liberty, like this, is the portion of all true Christians in the day that they flee to Christ by faith, and commit their souls to Him. That day they become free men. Liberty, like this, is their portion forevermore. Death cannot stop it. The grave cannot even hold their bodies for more than a little season. Those whom Christ makes free are free to all eternity.*

**Are you a TRUE DISCIPLE?**

**REMEMBER** A.T. Robertson — *Your future loyalty to my teaching will prove the reality of your present profession.*

Are you abiding in the Word, feeding yourself on it? Are you obeying the Word? Have you been freed from sin but you're living for self?

**Are you a TRULY FREE?** Only Jesus can set you free!