



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA
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The Gospel of John

True Identity

John 8:48-59

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

This morning we come to the closing section of John 8.

As we noted last week, every chapter of John's account of the life of Jesus is tethered to his prologue — and here in Chapter 8 John has recorded events in the life of Jesus that took place in Jerusalem around the Feast of Booths — and each of them **defines** and **proves** what John has to say about Jesus in the Prologue (1:1-18)

John 1:1-18 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.... ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....¹⁶And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In this Chapter Jesus has revealed Himself to be THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. He has addressed revealed the essence of what it means to be a TRUE DISCIPLE. He has revealed to them the fact that men and women are SLAVES TO SIN. He revealed the meaning of TRUE FREEDOM. He has revealed to them what it means to be a TRUE SON of God. As the Chapter closes the crowd is going to ask Jesus the question — *Who do you think you are?* In His answer, Jesus is going divulge in the clearest of terms His TRUE IDENTITY. It is, I believe, the clearest declaration in all of the Bible, that Jesus is indeed God incarnate!

We pick up in VERSE 48

This is so helpful! If any of you have ever tried talking to someone about Jesus — you know what can often happen. You begin to talk to them about the reality of sin and the need to be set free from sin. You tell them about the reality of God's great love in sending Jesus to be the One and Only remedy for sin. They contest your claims — but you keep giving them a reason for the hope that lies within you. And as their arguments begin to crumble — where does the conversation go? It suddenly goes completely off topic and they begin to attack **you!** They begin to vent all of their pent up animosity against those so-called “Christians” who blow up abortion clinics and murder homosexuals — against YOU and Jesus! They vent their hatred for genuine Christians who offend them simply because they simply love Jesus and believe that the Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God to obeyed and trusted. It's not about Jesus and sin anymore. It's about you. Do not feel bad! Jesus had the same thing happen to Him!

⁴⁸The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

We spent a great deal of time in the Fourth Chapter of John's Gospel studying the ancient animosity that existed between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews hated the Samaritans because after the Northern Kingdom was led into captivity by the Assyrians; some of those Jews remained in Samaria and were assimilated into the culture of the pagans who were sent to occupy that region. The result was a syncretism between Judaism and pagan religion. The Samaritans rejected big chunks of the Old Testament. They had all kinds of aberrant theology. They set up their own temple. They had their own priesthood. They were involved in occultic practices — perhaps even human sacrifice — all the while claiming to be worshiping the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For THAT the Jews hated them!

So this is the worst possible accusation and insult! They are calling Jesus a heretic, a demon possessed lunatic! They're essentially telling Jesus that He needs to go to seminary and have that demon cast out before he can talk to them about God. So if someone starts to attack you personally don't feel bad, you're in really good company. Jesus had one of "those" days! This is so important to us — That is what makes Jesus our *great high priest*.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

⁴⁹Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge

AGAIN — We are brought back to the Prologue — *We beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* Jesus is the Truth Teller in a world of lies.

I tell you the truth. I came to honor God and you dishonor me.

By dishonoring me, you dishonor God.

I came to serve God.

I came to speak God's truth.

DON'T MISS THIS — Jesus is declaring that He is all about His Father's business and His Father's glory! He is telling them that if they have a problem with Him, they really have a problem with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. If they have a problem with Jesus they need to take it up with the God they claim to worship — because HE is the One who sent Jesus! So they should stop calling Him dirty names!

⁵¹Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

TWO THINGS HERE —

1.) Jesus actually CONTINUES to speak to them! They have already insinuated that He was illegitimate. Now they hurl the biggest possible insult at him — **and He still engages them! THAT is our Jesus.** What a challenge to us — because when someone calls us an illegitimate, lying, demon possessed heretic — we call it a day and ask God to make sure He reserves a special place in hell for them!!

2.) Jesus not only continues — but he makes them a promise! *Commit yourself to my teachings, you'll never taste death.*

THIS IS HUGE — Here in this chapter Jesus has now addressed **the** two great enemies of mankind — Sin and Death.

⁵²The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon!

Before it was a close vote. Now it's unanimous.

Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?”

This is great! Here are the professional theologians arguing with Jesus. *Well who in the world do you think you are?* Jesus is going to tell them — and you might find yourself deeply troubled by what He is going to say! Jesus is going to declare His **TRUE IDENTITY.**

Before we get there I want us to consider how Jesus is dealing with the crowd. There are times in the Gospels when we find Jesus to be incredibly HARSH. There are also times when we find Jesus to be the most tender and gentle man in all of human history. What we discover is that the response of Jesus is directly associated with the attitudes of those He is dealing with. When people come to Jesus broken — at the end of their rope — fully aware of the fact that they have blown it — desperate for grace — not trying to excuse themselves but begging for forgiveness and mercy — we find Jesus responding with compassion, patience, loving kindness. But, when the self-righteous person comes — angry and deaf to anything He says — wanting only to debate and make a fool of him — He is incredibly harsh. He has just told a group of people — who are the equivalent of modern day church-going, don't drink, don't own a TV, don't go to movies kind of

people — that their father is the Devil. And by the way — if you have not trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins — you can go to church, not drink, not do drugs — not own a TV — not go to movies — belong to PETA and home school your kids — and YOUR father is the devil. If you have not trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, YOU are by nature children of wrath — just as much as someone who is a drunk, or a drug user, or someone involved in pornography or adultery or a homosexual lifestyle!

So — as we watch Jesus continue — he is going to get even harsher with them. He is going to press them concerning their condition before Him. And THAT is the way Jesus deals with anyone today who tries to maintain the notion that they are a basically good and spiritual person. **Jesus will not let you escape** the fact that apart from being born again you belong to Satan.

So Jesus continues.

⁵⁴Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing.

If I came here to make a reputation — make a name for myself — that wouldn't be anything special. That is what every man and woman does by nature.

It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’

Jesus says — *Your own Scriptures declare that the God of Israel shares His glory with no one — that Glory belongs to God alone. But the One, True and Living God, that you claim as your God— He is my Father. And My Father gives me glory. He adores Me, and confers glory upon Me!*

⁵⁵But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.

Can't you just feel the temperature rising in that crowd?

HUGE — They have indignantly asked Jesus — *Who in the world do you think you are!* Jesus is going to divulge His TRUE IDENTITY. He is going to make, what I believe to be, the clearest declaration in all of the Bible that he is indeed God Incarnate.

⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”

You guys want to talk about Abraham — how about this? Abraham was looking forward to Me! Thousands of years ago — when he laid in his bed at night — Abraham was thinking about me!

Here’s the back story. We talked a lot about Abraham last week — we saw that he was a man who believed and received the Word of God and the promises of God. Abraham’s wife was named Sarah. God had promised Abraham that he was going to make a nation through Abraham — that through Abraham God would bless all the nations of the earth. Abraham believed the promise of God — but Sarah was barren. A lot of time passes without Abraham and Sarah conceiving. Then God shows up and makes a promise.

***Genesis 17:15-19** And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”¹⁷Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”¹⁸And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!”¹⁹God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.*

About 10 years after that

***Genesis 18:9-15** ¹⁰The Lord said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. ¹¹Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹²So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?”¹³The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’¹⁴Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”¹⁵But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”*

What does God name the child? Laughter — that is what Isaac means. They love this boy — He was a living miracle. 100 year old people aren't even supposed to be doing the kind of things that make babies — let alone have babies!

They have the boy — they love the boy. Then in **Genesis 22** we read

Genesis 22:1-3 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I."² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

The land of Canaan was inhabited by pagan people groups. They would offer their children as human sacrifices to their pagan gods. God's people never were NEVER to offer to God human sacrifices. Abraham obeys God — not knowing the end of the story. Abraham did not know that God was not going to allow him to slay Isaac.

So he takes his son up to Mount Moriah. This was a very real event in the life of Abraham and his son. But it was also a powerful prophetic picture of **John 3:16** —

In **Genesis 22**— *Take now your son, your only son whom you love....*

In **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son...*
(We spent an entire Monday night looking at **Genesis 22** and **John 3:16** back in 2005).

Isaac carries his own wood on his own back — looking forward to day that the Son of God would carry the cross.

Along the way

Genesis 22:7-8 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. (KJV = God will provide Himself for a burnt offering)

When they get there

Genesis 22:9⁹....Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Isaac was a young man at this moment in time. He could have said — *I have a better idea dad — how bout if I put YOU on the altar!* There is no way he couldn't have beat up his 120-130 year old dad. Even if he couldn't — he could have at least outrun him. If you're a 20-30 year old guy and you can't outrun a 120-130 year old man you need to go to the gym and work out on the elliptical trainer.

So we know that Isaac could have definitely gotten out of this deal had he wanted. Isaac willingly lays himself down on the altar — and is willing to die at the hands of his father. Just like Jesus.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Just when Abraham was ready to slay his son —

Genesis 22:11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

In the Old Testament the phrase **AN angel of the Lord** is a reference to an angelic being. **THE angel of the Lord** usually is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

Genesis 22:11-12 And he said, "Here am I."¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

So right **there** in the Book of Genesis — **Jesus** shows up and says to Abraham — *don't kill your son.*

*Genesis 22:13-14 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide" (**Jehovah Jireh**); as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."*

Abraham prophesies that God will provide His only begotten Son as a sacrifice on that very spot. **HUGE** — The temple Mount and Golgotha are at the pinnacle of Mount Moriah.

And then God makes a promise — the same promise that is made to Abraham in **Genesis 12** and **15**— that through his descendents all nations of the earth would be blessed, that all races and cultures and tribes and languages, nations of people, including our own, would be blessed through the descendents of Abraham — from whom would come the person of Jesus Christ, **who is standing before them in John 8** saying — *Abraham was looking forward to my day. I am the means by which all nations of the earth will be blessed — I'm the sacrifice for sin that God promised to provide on Mount Moriah.*

⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”

You're a 30-year old man! What are you talking about?

⁵⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you...”

He's very emphatic — He's very deliberate — *I tell you the truth.*

⁵⁸....before Abraham was, I am.”

“Before Abraham even came into existence — I AM.”

We have touched on this NAME on a number of occasions in our study of **John 8**.

Back in **Exodus 3** — we find Moses tending sheep on the *“backside of the desert” (KJV)*. Moses was raised in Egypt as the *“son of Pharaoh's daughter”* in palace of Pharaoh. He kills an Egyptian taskmaster for beating a Hebrew slave. He ends up running for his life and ends up in a not so palatial spot called Midian. There at the well of Midian he comes to the rescue of a bunch of women and they take him home to meet dad — a guy named Jethro. Moses settles down in Midian and marries one of Jethro's daughters and has a couple boys. He works for his father-in-law by tending his sheep. So — from man's point of view Moses was a man on the DOWNSIDE of life. He has gone from Pharaoh's palace —to tending sheep on the BACKSIDE of the desert. One day while Moses is tending sheep God appears to Moses in a burning bush. The bush was on fire but it wasn't being consumed. As Moses goes to get a close look at it — the bush speaks to him — and gives to Moses a very strange and daunting job to do — *Go into Egypt, the most powerful*

nation in the earth, tell Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the planet, that he has to let My people go — all 3 million of them.

Moses understands that you can't stand before Pharaoh and several million Hebrews and say — THE BUSH SENT ME TO TELL YOU THIS! So Moses asks the obvious question — *Who should I say has sent me?* God answers Moses and reveals his holy name.

THIS IS SO AMAZING — SO HUGE! Fallen man does not know God. He can only speculate as to the nature of God and the ways of God and the way to God.

The only way fallen man can know about God is if God reveals himself (See Credo Series – REVELATION: God Speaks). And at that moment in **Exodus 3** God reveals himself to Moses — and reveals to Moses His holy name — ***I AM***.

Wrapped up in this name is the ETERNALITY of God. It's not that God **was** or God **will be**. God simply **IS**. God is always in the present. He is outside of time. He is the great I AM. He works **in time** — but **He is eternal** — **without beginning or end**. The Name of God — *Yahweh* — was so sacred that the Jews wouldn't speak it for fear that they would blaspheme God. Even when they would write it in the Scriptures they would take out the vowels so that no one would be able to pronounce it — YHVH — the tetragrammaton. Even today, an Orthodox Jew writes "G_d."

WE CAN NOT MISS THIS — Here is Jesus, a young man, a good Jew, a Bible teacher — and He says that *before Abraham was born I AM*. He is effectively saying that HE is the self-existent, eternal God, come in the flesh. He is telling them that they are looking upon God who spoke the universe into existence. He is telling them that HE created Abraham. He is telling them that HE spoke to Moses in the burning bush!

This declaration of Jesus stands in utter contrast to the popular takes on Jesus.

Sources like John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, Harold Funk, The Jesus Seminar, John Shelby Spong, Peter Jennings and his project on the search for Jesus — they all say that Jesus was a really nice guy, a simple teacher, and a decent moral man. They say that Jesus taught practical living principles — but He never taught that He was God — and never believed Himself that He was God. They say that it wasn't until **after** His death that his followers began to promote the myth that Jesus was God.

John 8 tells us the exact opposite! It wasn't the followers of Jesus who made up the idea that he was God. Jesus openly declared His TRUE IDENTITY!

Jesus was either a liar (and if Jesus was lying— according to his own words —His father was the Devil) or a demon possessed lunatic, or He is the Truth Teller — and He really is God Incarnate.

DON'T MISS THIS — John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, Harold Funk, The Jesus Seminar, John Shelby Spong, and Peter Jennings might have missed it. But the Jews in **John 8** understood perfectly what Jesus had just said!

⁵⁹So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

They knew that he had just declared himself to be God — which according to Jewish Old Testament Law — was blasphemy — a crime punishable by stoning to death (Leviticus).

If Jesus did not mean that He was the Great I AM — it would have made perfect sense for Jesus to clear up the misunderstanding!

From this point forward the rulers of the Jews are totally committed to seeking his death. This statement will cost Jesus Christ his life. Jesus knows that. He paused to let them know that he was telling the truth. He was very clear and very emphatic in revealing His TRUE IDENTITY — knowing that it would ultimately cause his death. HUGE — Yet Jesus loved them so much that He would not leave them in the dark as to His TRUE IDENTITY. It was left to them to reject Him or embrace Him as God who became man!

We have to ask the reasonable question — *Why in the world would Jesus be willing to die a brutal and bloody death and suffer the flames of Hell as a blasphemer if this was not His TRUE IDENTITY?*

So we have in this magnificent chapter of this magnificent book of John's Gospel, the bread and butter of Christianity.

In this chapter Jesus has taught us about TRUE FREEDOM. This lost world has a very untrue concept of freedom. We think that freedom means that we can do

whatever we want. WRONG — that just brings us right back to be a slave to our own sin again — we're right back under Satan.

Jesus wants us to experience TRUE FREEDOM

Jesus wants us to be free from serving sin; and free to serve God.

Jesus wants us to be free from Death. Paul says death is our enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). What God wants for us is eternal life. He wants to give us life.

Jesus wants to free us from Lies. The enemy tells us all kinds of lies about God and about ourselves that are not true. And Jesus wants to break through that and free us from lies.

Jesus wants to free us from the Devil so that we can be free to be adopted as children of God.

Jesus wants us to be free from slavery so we can be sons.

REALITY — You and I are contingent beings. Only God is self-existent and truly independent (I AM). God doesn't need us — but we need Him. God can certainly live independent of us. God was just fine without us for eternity before he created us. God is fine without me. But I am not fine without God. I need God. Someone says — well Jesus is just a crutch for weak people. He's not a crutch — He's the stretcher — He's the whole ICU! If you have broken arms and broken legs and you've stopped breathing you NEED to have someone pick you up.

So Jesus frees us from sin, Satan, lies, death, slavery. THEN — He frees us to serve God, and righteousness — free to worship, free us to the truth.

NONE OF THIS COULD HAPPEN without God INITIATING — God SENDING Jesus

NONE OF THIS COULD HAPPEN without God REVEALING to us TRUTH

REVEALING to us our TRUE IDENTITY: We were in the dark. God became man in the person of Jesus — the Light of the World. God shined into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. God called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. He has translated us out of darkness into the Kingdom of His Son.

REVEALING to us our TRUE IDENTITY: We were slaves to the presence and power of sin — which kills!

REVEALING to us the TRUE IDENTITY OF JESUS: *“Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”*

The only one who could save the Jews from bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh was the One, True and Living God. He revealed His name to Moses — I AM. In the Bible Egypt is a picture of this lost world and Pharaoh is a picture of Satan.

Jesus is the Great I AM who became man! Once again we are taken back to the prologue — *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.* The Great I AM is the only one who can save us — set us free. Because of the cross of Jesus we go from Satan to God, lies to truth, death to life, slavery to sonship.

And then He invites us to be TRUE DISCIPLES: He invites us to CONTINUE in His Word — continue to throw ourselves into his instruction and abide in that.

TWO CLOSING THOUGHTS — And neither sits well with our pride.

- 1.) You cannot master your own life. We are desperately in need of depending upon God.
- 2.) We need to understand that the real issue is Sin. Do you sin? YES, you do. What will you do about it? It's an offense against God. It is a problem that God has with you. Jesus invites you to take your sin and give it to him. Jesus says — *I'm without sin.* You and I have sinned. Jesus conquers sin and death by living a sinless life and dying in our place — our sin was laid upon Jesus. He lived the life we should — but don't. He died the death we should—but will never have to — if we believe the good News.

RESPOND