
Who's your Daddy?

John 8:31-59

Pastor Russ Kennedy

Many of us grew up in Christian homes...

Many of us grew up in Christian churches...

Many of us had professions of faith that turned out to be false – thank God for grace that granted true saving faith in the midst of self-deceived and false belief.

So, our text opens with this statement, “Many believed in Him.” How hopeful this sounds...

Why then does Jesus seem to challenge them? It is going to almost seem as though he is seeking to undermine rather than confirm their faith. Shocking yes. What is the problem? They believe in Jesus *but not in a way that is going to save them.*

Why is this belief not one that actually saves them? Because it refuses to accept the Bible's description of them and analysis of their problem. They were depending on the wrong things for their relationship to God.

Their Spiritual Bondage

(v. 30-36)

The Jews deny their enslavement to sin. They are depending on their physical parentage for their spiritual relationship.

The Necessary Condition

(v. 30-32)

³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him. ³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

They need to abide, to remain in Jesus' word. If they continue, then they are disciples. True disciples continue to believe God's Word. Simple statement. Sounds a small warning but maybe shouldn't raise great alarm.

If they do, they will know the truth and it will set them free. True disciples keep on believing come to know the Word well. Abiding in the truth is the way you get to know the truth intimately. Casual contact and or unbelieving engagement will not result in a wise and deep knowledge of the Word. This abiding and knowing will set them free.

Here is another oft misused verse.

It is not just *truth* as in accurate data. What is required here is Truth. True freedom comes from knowing the truth the Bible teaches. So knowing your math, your science, your history is useful but it does not "set you free". Why?

It is not freedom from ignorance, economic or political slavery. The Jews made that mistake. It will become obvious that they thought Jesus was talking about some sort of physical slavery. That is not what Jesus is talking about – so don't use the text that way.

The Genuine Deliverance

(v. 33-36)

In their dialog with Jesus it becomes evident that they do not understand what is wrong and therefore the genuine deliverance knowing the truth brings.

³³ 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'?" ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

They make an astonishing assertion. Because they are physically descended from Abraham they have never been enslaved. What?!? Egypt? Assyria? Babylon? Now Rome? This is not just ignorance of history this is sheer ethnic pride. We may have been in captivity but we have never been slaves.

Jesus responds with a powerful correction. They are in fact enslaved to sin. Since they are slaves they will not remain in the spiritual family of Abraham. Slaves get cut off. But true sons remain in the family. So, if the true Son, the Lord Jesus, delivers them from slavery and (by implication) turns them into sons who will remain.

We are actually enslaved to sin and the true freedom Jesus brings comes through continuing to believe the truth the Bible teaches.

Their Spiritual Parentage

(v. 37-47)

The second reason their belief does not save is because of their parentage. Jesus is about to shock the Jews, not with a claim about Himself, but with a diagnosis about them.

The Provocative Challenge

(v. 37-38)

Jesus' opening salvo is a personal challenge about their true parentage.

³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Jesus agrees with them about their physical lineage. However, because Jesus' words have no abiding place in them, then they will do what their real father is like. Just as Jesus does what his Father tells him, they do what they have heard from their true father.

The Personal Evidence

(v. 39-40)

The personal evidence denies what they think about themselves.

³⁹ They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.

They are relying on their relationship to Abraham and thus their ethnic and religious identity. But the evidence of their life points to their having a different spiritual father.

The Actual Explanation

(v. 41-43)

Jesus responds with the actual explanation of why their belief is not genuine.

⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

Well, what a snide response. “We weren’t born out of immorality like you were. And, we have God as our Father.” I love the way Jesus simply won’t rise to the bait. What a great response – if God is your Father then you would love Jesus. But you don’t even understand what is going on here. Why not? Because you have your fingers in your spiritual ears; “La la la la...”

The Shocking Revelation

(v. 44)

Who their real father is comes as a shocking revelation.

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Their real spiritual father is the devil. Wow. Ok. How can Jesus say that? Because the devil is a liar and murderer and always has been. What he does arises from his character. This is not unique to the devil. All beings do this. And so, these Jews also do what they do because of who they are. They lie and kill because they are liars and murderers.

The Functional Reason

(v. 45-47)

There is a practical reason why they do not hear with faith.

⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

Do you see it? *Because* Jesus is speaking the truth they do not believe Him. They do not hear and believe because they cannot. They are not “of God” and therefore do not actually hear the truth with understanding. Yet they are still responsible and condemned

So, though they have some kind of belief, they are actually sons of the devil and need the true relationship that comes through the new birth.

Their Spiritual Rejection**(v. 48-59)**

Their belief will not save them because of their rejection of three important truths.

Of Jesus' Character**(v. 48-50)**

Their belief will not save them because of their rejection of Jesus' character.

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹ Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.

So, the Jews call Jesus is a demon possessed half-breed. The humility and purity of Jesus has been on public display for some time. He has not sought to promote Himself. His Father is promoted the glory of Jesus. He is the true judge of Jesus' character.

Of Jesus' Claims**(v. 51-56)**

Their belief will not save them because of their rejection of Jesus' claims.

⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." ⁵² The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' ⁵⁵ But 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. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."

Jesus seems to just pile it on. Those who keep Jesus' word will not see death. It is no wonder they respond like they do. Even Abraham and all the prophets died – who are you? You are just promoting yourself.

Jesus connects His obedience to the Father with the Father promoting Jesus' glory. Jesus knows the Father, obeys the Father and thus is recognized and honored by the Father. But they will have none of it. If they have truly been Abraham's sons, then they would have been glad to see Jesus having His day. This, not because Abraham would have if he could have, but because Abraham was glad because he did see it.

Of Jesus' Deity**(v. 57-59)**

Their belief will not save them because of their rejection of Jesus' Deity.

⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Yes, Jesus was alive in Abraham's day. He has always been alive. He "is" before Abraham was born. He is God. The Jews clearly understand what Jesus is asserting. So, those who had heard His word and had believed, start scrabbling around to stones to hurl at Him and conduct a citizen's execution. But it is not time to die; it is time to hide and leave.

They are actually unbelievers and need the belief and repentance that Abraham experienced and expressed.

Reflect and Respond

So, we have this story of Jesus interacting with Jews who thought they had believed in Jesus but then are confronted with the facts that they don't accept Jesus' description and diagnosis of them. So...

Does this make you a bit nervous?

Is it possible that you can have a belief that does not save?

Is it possible that you can be self-deceived about who's your daddy?

Is it possible that you can physically hear the Bible and not spiritually hear the Bible?

Yes, this is why John wrote this book. He is writing to the church to call us to carefully consider our faith. There are kinds of faith and belief that will not save. Many, many people sitting in churches are in this dangerous and dreadful state.

How can you know if this is true of you? How can you know that you need to repent and actually believe the gospel? What are the symptoms of a false belief?

When you think that being saved is about where and how you grew up. Being in and around Christianity does not make you a Christian. Your religious home, your church upbringing, your Christian school, even your religious piety and good works do not make you a Christian.

When you continue to be enslaved to sin and live in denial of it. Now hear me well: Christians commit sin. We will until we are finally glorified. But we ought not to be enslaved to sin. The way to be delivered from the slavery of sin is to love, learn and live the truth. *This is the only way.* If you say myths, lies, untruths, falsehoods to yourself, sin will keep its old stranglehold on you. But if you receive, trust, think over, and live out the truth you hear, you will be free indeed.

When you can regularly hear the Bible and do not have a growing, spiritual understanding of it. In other words, God's Word is not finding its place in your heart. Will there be dry seasons? Yes, but if you desire to understand God's Word and cannot, then it is possible that you are not a true believer.

When you reject what the Bible says about who Jesus is and what He has done. That rejection may be quiet and hidden in the heart. Or it may be vocal and public and nasty. This comes from a heart that does not truly believe.

How can you know then that you have truly believed?

When you do not trust your religion for your salvation.

When you have growing victory over sin.

When you have a growing understanding of the Word.

When you affirm with gladness all that the Bible says about the Lord Jesus.

So many hearing the words of Jesus believed. But not really.

What about you?