

**The Word Became Flesh
(Week 25)
John 8:30-59
“Faith + Following = Freedom”**

Introduction

Everyone who believes that Jesus is The Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves The Father also loves the One born of Him. This is how we know that we love God’s children: when we love God and obey His commands. For this is what love for God is: to keep His commands. **1 John 5:1-3a CSB**

Have you ever known someone who came to a church service, heard the Word of God being preached and responded in what appeared to be genuine faith, and then went immediately back to their old sinful ways? If you have been in church for any length of time, then the answer is a resounding “yes!” We have all witnessed something very similar. The debate among many evangelical circles that surrounds circumstances such as these is quite confusing, as well as, a bit disturbing. Some well intentioned believers will say, “If they confessed Jesus as LORD, then such a one is saved no matter what. After all, are we not saved by grace though faith alone?”

Others who do not believe in eternal security will counter with the argument that such a person was in fact saved upon their profession of faith, but have since fallen from grace and lost their salvation. The fact of the matter is that both of these arguments are incorrect. While it is true that salvation does come from faith alone, there is a major difference between shallow belief and true saving faith. For as James has so eloquently said:

“...faith, if it does not have works, is DEAD by itself.”

James 2:17 CSB

(emphasis added)

So with that being said; is a person who comes to the altar, makes a profession of faith, and then returns to their life of sin really saved? Answer: No. Saving faith always produces obedience to Christ. Period, end of debate. Just because someone claims that Jesus is their LORD doesn’t necessarily prove that they belong to Him. Listen to the words of Christ Himself:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘LORD, LORD,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

Matthew 7:21 CSB

So that settles it. There is most definitely such a thing as “dead faith”. And if we would like to see a perfect example, we need to look no further than the last half of **John Chapter 8** to witness such meaningless faith in action. As Jesus spoke to the crowd that day in the temple courts, John tells us that many of the people believed in Him (**John 8:30**). But Jesus knew their hearts, and when He began to apply pressure to test their faith, the darkness that was inside them came flooding to the surface. The result was a clash between darkness and The Light. For you see, Christ knows the difference between lip service and true transformational belief. And His Word can expose us all for what we truly are on the inside.

Just as genuine faith will automatically produce good works, superficial faith also has its byproducts. And in this passage, we can clearly witness the offspring of dead faith. Those who possess a dead faith are **empty**, **enslaved**, and **enraged** upon hearing truth. They have no desire for sound doctrine, but rather, prefer to surround themselves with teachers who will tell them what their itching ears want to hear (**2 Timothy 4:3**). This is the sad reality of the self-righteous, who claim to love Jesus and yet love their own sin all the more. Make no mistake... This kind of person will never be found in heaven. So, let us examine our own hearts today, as we look together to this intense exchange between The Savior and those who believe they do not need saving. As the Word of God asks the question: Do you have a dead faith or a saving faith?

Empty (vs. 30-32)

As he was saying these things, many believed in him. Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples. You will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free." **John 8:30-32 CSB**

As Jesus spoke that day in the Temple Court of Women, John tells us that many were persuaded by His message and started to believe in Him. Upon first reading these words, it is easy for us to get excited. For, as believers, we are always happy to see a sinner come to faith. We can be easily deceived when someone tells us that they have come to believe. And naturally, we want to see everyone come to faith in Christ. But we must never forget that mere words, that are not accompanied by actions, mean nothing. You show me someone who says that their salvation experience hasn't changed them, and I will show you a person who has deceived himself. You cannot stay where you are and go with God!

When the people that day made their seemingly sincere "declaration of faith", Jesus saw it for what it was; a shallow and meaningless belief, from a people who had no intention of repenting. They just expected Jesus to accept them as they were. They were convinced that they didn't need "saving" and that He would be impressed with them. He wasn't. He could see into their hearts. A person has to realize that they NEED saving in order to BE saved. Jesus told the crowd that if they truly believed in Him, then they would follow Him. For you see, genuine salvation is always accompanied by a change of direction.

The word "disciple" in the Greek (*mathetes*) means "learner". So, what is it that a disciple of Christ must learn? The Word of God. Jesus was telling the people that if they followed after Him and continued in His Word, then they would be set free. Free from what? Sin. This is the effect that The Word has on a true believer. First, we place our faith in Christ. And then, we are filled with His Spirit. The Spirit will guide us into all truth (**16:13**). And that TRUTH, Christ says, will free us from the bondage of sin in our lives. *The Bible* tells us that God is "The God of Truth" (**Deuteronomy 32:4**). It also refers to The Spirit as "The Spirit of Truth" (**John 16:13**). And *The Bible* itself is called "The Word of Truth" (**2 Timothy 2:15**). And Jesus Christ IS The Truth (**John 14:6**). As we allow the Spirit of Truth to Guide us in The Word of Truth, then that Truth will set us free.

So, how can a person claim to have faith and not long to follow the truth of Christ? Answer: because that person is empty inside, meaning they do not have the Spirit living within them. They may indeed claim to have faith, but it is not a SAVING Faith. And those who do not possess saving faith are still bound by their sin. Only by The Spirit and The Word can we follow Christ, and it is by continuing in The Word that one by one the chains of sin are broken in our lives. The Spirit uses The Word to convict us of sin, and we turn away from those sins more and more as we mature in our saving faith. This process is called sanctification, and if it is not occurring in a person's life, then that person is devoid of God's Spirit. They are empty. They are still in bondage to sin, and only The Truth can set them free.

Enslaved (vs. 33-41)

"We are descendants of Abraham," they answered him, "and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, 'You will become free'?" Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever. So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free. I know you are descendants of Abraham, but you are trying to kill Me because My word has no place among you. I speak what I have seen in the presence of the Father; so then, you do what you have heard from your father." "Our father is Abraham," they replied. "If you were Abraham's children," Jesus told them, "you would do what Abraham did. But now you are trying to kill Me, a Man Who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You're doing what your father does." "We weren't born of sexual immorality," they said. "We have one Father—God." **John 8:33-41 CSB**

These self-righteous Jews truly believed that because they were descended from Abraham, they were perfectly acceptable to God. How deceived they were, to believe that a person is made whole before God simply on the basis of heritage! Jesus' response to them was quite remarkable. He subtly reminded them that Abraham had two children, one who was born to a slave and another that was born of a promise. This is what He means when He said:

“A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever.”

John 8:35 CSB

For you see, Ismael was also a descendant of Abraham, but he was sent away. Isaac was the son of the promise. He was the one through whom God kept His promises to Abraham regarding his descendants and the blessings that would come to the world as a result. Both were sons of Abraham, yet one did not remain in “the household” forever. The Jewish people were given great blessing by God. The Word of God was given to them to share with the world. The Son of God was born from the line of Abraham, but being merely a descendant of Abraham wasn't enough. They had to come to a saving faith in The Son.

To reject the son is to remain enslaved to sin. Just as Ismael was born to a slave woman and was one day rejected by his father, God The Father will reject those who remain enslaved to sin. And why was Ismael dismissed from the family? Because he mistreated Isaac, the son of the promise. In the same way, those who mistreat the Son of God will never be accepted into the family of God. No matter how religious their heritage may be!

Jesus went on to tell the Jewish leaders that they may very well have been descended from Abraham, but they were nothing like Abraham! For the father of Israel would have never rejected the Only Begotten Son of God. These men wanted Jesus dead, and that in and of itself was proof that they were not true sons of Abraham. They were sons of Satan and were enslaved by him in the bondage of sin and evil desires. As the conversation progresses, more and more of their “true father's” personality is revealed from within their evil hearts. The devil was their father, and they were a chip off the old block, as it were.

The Jewish leaders were becoming increasingly angry as Jesus confronted them with the truth. They lashed out at him, when he told them who their true father was:

“We weren't born of sexual immorality, they said. We have one Father—God.”

John 8:41b

Do not miss what they are saying here. They had done their “homework”, so to speak. They no doubt had been informed of the mysterious circumstances of Jesus' birth. They knew that He was born before His earthly parents were married. They, of course, had no idea that it was God Who had caused His conception. Rather, they were accusing Him of being born as a result of sexual immorality.

Have you ever noticed how someone who is empty of The Spirit and enslaved to sin will react to the conviction of God's Word? It is often a response of deflection and anger. This is what a lost person will often do, rather than repent, when the truth exposes what is in their hearts. This is why the conversation from this point on in the narrative takes on a sinister and evil turn.

Enraged (vs. 42–59)

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn't come on My own, but He sent Me. Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the

father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe Me? The one who is from God listens to God's words. This is why you don't listen, because you are not from God.

The Jews responded to him, "Aren't we right in saying that you're a Samaritan and have a demon?" "I do not have a demon," Jesus answered. "On the contrary, I honor my Father and you dishonor Me. I do not seek My own glory; there is One Who seeks it and judges. Truly I tell you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death."

Then the Jews said, "Now we know you have a demon. Abraham died and so did the prophets. You say, 'if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham who died? And the prophets died. Who do you claim to be?" "If I glorify Myself," Jesus answered, "My glory is nothing. My Father—about whom you say, 'He is our God'—He is the One Who glorifies Me. You do not know Him, but I know Him. If I were to say I don't know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was glad."

The Jews replied, "You aren't fifty years old yet, and you've seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I Am." So they picked up stones to throw at him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple.

As the conversation progresses, the religious leaders become more and more angry and insulting. They were completely furious at the notion that they were not acceptable to God as they were. And rather than repent, they reacted the way that many of those who are spiritually empty and completely enslaved by sin often do... with anger. As I am writing this, I cannot help but think of the divisive nature of our own country these days. Everyone seems angry. There is no such thing as dialog anymore, simply one side hurling insults and accusations against the other. It has become an absolute nightmare to watch the news lately.

The Jews that day threw every kind of insult they could think of at Jesus. He was simply telling them the truth. He had offered to set them free, but they would rather cling to their own misguided notions of self-righteousness. They accused Him of being an illegitimate child. Then, as if that weren't mean spirited enough, they accused Him of being a Samaritan. Which at the time was about the worst "racial slur" they could think of, for the Jews despised the Samaritans. They considered them to be worse than dogs.

And, as if that weren't bad enough, they accused The Savior of being demon possessed. Can you even image how evil a person would have to be to accuse God of being demonic? And even if you thought it were true, imagine saying such a thing to God? These men were exactly as Christ said. They were children of the devil. He made it plain to them. If they truly belonged to God, then they would have accepted Him. I am reminded here of the words of The Apostle Paul:

Therefore I want you to know that no one speaking by The Spirit of God says, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is LORD," except by the Holy Spirit.
1 Corinthians 12:3 CSB

These very same people who began by claiming to believe, ended up being exposed for the frauds that they were. You can fool a lot of people in this world, but you cannot fool God. He knows your heart. He knows whether you have a dead faith or a faith that leads to salvation. These men proved without question that they most certainly were nothing like Abraham and did not belong to God. Their hatred of the truth proves this beyond any shadow of doubt.

The first several times I read this passage I was struck by how evil and cruel that these men were to the Son of God. Even as He held out His hand to offer them freedom from their bondage. But as I read it again and again, I was struck by something else. I was taken aback by the way that Jesus responded. He didn't get angry. He didn't become indignant. He simply denied their accusations and spoke the truth to them over and over again. How could He do such a thing? Because He loved them, even as they hated Him for it in return. He didn't water down the truth, but He also didn't respond in anger. If you love someone, then you often have to share with them the things that they do not wish to hear! And this is exactly what He did. And even as they stood there enraged and wanting to kill Him, He was offering them eternal life. This is how a person behaves when they are filled with the Spirit of The Living God!

Jesus told them that if they would simply listen to His Word, then they would know the truth and the truth would set them free. He promised that anyone who would trust His Word would never see death. He told them that Abraham, the very same Abraham that they called "father", had rejoiced to hear of His coming to save us from sin. Obviously, God had revealed to the old patriarch His plan for The Messiah to come and die for the sins of the world. Some two thousand years before Jesus came, father Abraham rejoiced to know that He was coming!

When the Pharisees heard this, they were even more furious, asking Jesus how Abraham could have possibly ever known of Him, since He wasn't even fifty years old, and the old patriarch had been dead for thousands of years. The Savior answered them once more with the same truth that He had been telling them from the beginning:

...*"Truly I tell you, before Abraham was... I Am."*

John 8:58b CSB

They responded by picking up stones to stone Him, but He simply disappeared from their sight. For He is The Great I Am, Who was and is, and is to come. And THAT is the Truth.

So what kind of faith do you have today? A dead faith that claims to believe in Christ, but does not love Him enough to follow. Or do you have the kind of faith that causes you to obey Him, to hunger for His Word and allow The Spirit to change you from the inside out. Ask The Spirit to search your heart today and lead you into The Light, before it is too late, and Jesus disappears from your sight. Saving faith is a following faith. And faith plus following equals freedom. You cannot stay where you are, and go with God.

And let all those who know the truth and are set free say... TRUTH!!!