

Livin' the Life
Find True Freedom
8:31-38

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David Taylor

We are looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises in our series on the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life. Today's message, Finding True Freedom, is from 8:31-38. Please turn to John 8:31-38 and read along or listen as we read God's word.

Last week we saw Jesus speaking to those who had believed in him to clarify what it means to genuinely believe and really be disciples. Real disciples are those who abide in his word (31).¹ This week we are looking at the two promises that come to those who genuinely believe, who abide in his word. They will know the truth and the truth will set them free. That is our focus today, knowing the truth and the truth setting us free. Let's look at the first promise. If you genuinely believe, as evidenced by abiding in Jesus and his word, then you will know the truth. The truth is the person and work of Jesus Christ. We know this because Jesus uses almost the same language later in the passage, If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (36). The Truth is Jesus, the Son of God. John's gospel tells us that Jesus is the Son of God who is also God the Son who came to rescue us from our sin. Jesus can make these promises because he is God. You may believe that Jesus is just a good religious teacher but that goes against the evidence. The testimony of the New Testament is that God became a man in Jesus Christ, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins and rose again after three days. Jesus promises that first, by believing and abiding, you will know the truth. Jesus uses know to describe personal knowledge and experience of Jesus that comes by faith. You will know the one who defines truth and reality personally in a relationship.

The second promise is that the truth, that is, Jesus will set you free. The implication is that we are not free. The Jews understood this and claimed to be children of Abraham and never been enslaved to anyone. But Jesus tells them that anyone who sins is a slave to sin. And that slaves do not remain in the house permanently like a son does (33-35). Jesus promises if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed. You can take that to the bank. The implication is again, we are not morally free. The opposite of freedom is bondage and slavery.

We are enslaved two ways. We are enslaved by the power of sin and by the penalty of sin. The power of sin enslaves us by creating compelling desires or wants within us that compel us to sin. All of us are born captive to the power of sin by our own sinful condition. We are very good at it. Even our good intentions are tainted by sin. Our sinful actions are rooted in our sinful hearts. Your heart and my heart are like a desire factory that pumps out sinful desires. You may be able to put a cap on one desire but another pops up to replace it. You act selfish because you are selfish. You lie because you are a liar. Children disobey because they are disobedient, etc. You cannot change or stop those desires, you must be freed from them. If you recognize this, then there is hope in Jesus because he promises to set you free.

You may think you are not a slave to sin because you enjoy it and it is pleasurable. You want to do it. But consider this, step back and consider happiness without that pleasure you like so much. Consider happiness in the freedom from that sin you find so pleasurable. If you are not happy in the freedom from that pleasure then you are enslaved to it. This is what I mean by compelling desires that enslave us. True freedom is when your desires line up with what is morally good and beautiful. When your desires for Jesus are more than any other desire, you will be eternally free. Sin is seeing Jesus as boring, bland, unimpressive, less desirable than a multitude of other things we find more desirable. Jesus does this by changing your heart, giving you a new nature in the new birth (3:5-8). That is why I preach the way I do. I want all of us to see the real Jesus in all his glory, as more

¹ Some of them are not real disciples as they want to kill him (37), are indifferent to his word (37), want to kill him (37), do not do what Abraham did (39), and are children of the devil (44)!

compelling than everything else that seduces our interest. That is what frees us from the power of sin, making us free (2 Cor 3:18). I attempt to paint a compelling picture of Jesus every week so that your hearts find your joy and satisfaction in him.

Not only does Jesus promise to free us from the power of sin, Jesus also promises to free us from the penalty of sin. Sin not only creates compelling desires for sin but unless something changes so that you are freed from this power, the penalty is eternal damnation (3:36). That is a sobering truth. We don't want to hear it, just like we do not want to hear a diagnosis of a terminal disease from the doctor. But it is knowing the gravity of our diagnosis that we take seriously the treatment for it. The words of a cancer diagnosis is shocking, numbing, but is also a gracious gift if it wakes you up to reality and your own mortality. That is what Jesus means when he said you will die in your sins (8:24). The penalty of sin is that the weight and consequences of your sins are on you rather than on Jesus who was damned for you (Gal 3:13). The only way you do not die in your sins is Jesus. Jesus is the lamb of God who takes away your sins by forgiving you of your sins (2:4; 1:29) and taking away God's wrath from you (3:36).

Believing in Jesus, as evidenced in abiding in Jesus and his word frees us from the power and penalty of sin.

