

John 8:35-41 “Do the Things Your Father Does”

JOH 8:33-41 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. 37 I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father. 39 "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. 41 You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

One of the things we saw last week was how everyone in the world is a slave to something. In the spiritual sense people are slaves of only two possible choices. Either a slave to Satan and sin which leads to death, or a slave of Christ which leads to life; eternal life.

And so, Jesus is warning the Jews that freedom and slavery have everything to do with the one you align yourself with. But the Jews are thinking only in the temporal sense. They agree that aligning themselves to the proper side is vital. But they assume that their alignment to the physical lineage of Abraham is what Christ meant.

This is why they respond the way they do in verse 33.

JOH 8:33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

And of course Jesus responds to their faulty thinking that physical lineage has anything to do with spiritual status before God.

JOH 8:34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

This is the slavery Jesus was talking about. And this was vital for these Jews to understand because the ultimate penalty for sin is

eternal separation from the living God. And Jesus will not allow them to think that they somehow can depend on their ancestry to secure a place with their heavenly Father.

And so He brings up this whole issue of slavery to force them to consider the legal status they must have before God. At this point their legal status is, guilty as charged. As guilty people before a holy God, because of their slavery to sin, they must pay their own debt as they are forced out of the house of their master.

This is the imagery Jesus puts before them here in verse 35.

JOH 8:35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

What does Jesus mean by this? Well, keep in mind that our Lord has been talking about the status one has before God. He has been talking about ownership and slavery, and by implication being in debt to the one who owns you.

But simply being owned by a master didn't guarantee any slave a permanent claim on the inheritance of that master. Why? Because their status in that household was still that of a slave who had no rights. That slave could devote his entire life to serving that master. He could even make a lot of money for that master. But once that master died all of the inheritance went over to the family members.

Why? Because their status was one which identified them as being sons and daughters of that master. And so, as Jesus says in verse 35, "a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

A son has all the rights and privileges that his father passed on to him. He had the power to do with his property as he desired. And if he chose to set a slave free he had the power and authority to do that, thus changing the status of that slave to a free man. This is where Jesus is going with His thought in the next verse.

JOH 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Jesus has just told these Jews that they are slaves to sin. He then says that He has the authority and the power to set them free from the penalty of their sin and thus the slavery that goes along with it which is eternal punishment.

Now what this means is that if what Jesus says is true, (and of course we know that it is), then He has the same authority as the

Father which means Jesus has to be God, because only God can forgive sin.

In fact, Jesus dealt with this whole issue when He took the opportunity to teach the crowds that He had the authority to forgive sin which was reserved only for God.

MAT 9:2-7 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" 4 Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? 5 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." 7 And the man got up and went home.

Which is harder for God to do, heal a man, or forgive his sins? That's the question posed to these crowds. And Jesus answers this question for them by giving them a demonstration of His authority and power as God in the flesh. By healing the man He proved that He had also the authority to forgive his sins.

The Jews were trying to find fault with Jesus at every turn and yet Jesus is continually saying that He only wants to set them free. He only wants to forgive their sin. He only wants to bring them home to their heavenly Father.

And yet they want to kill Him. This is amazing grace on Christ's part. This is an awesome love that God has for us that He would send His only Son into this world to die for our sin and pay our debt for us, even while we are His enemies. This is exactly what the apostle Paul told the Romans.

ROM 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Can you imagine giving your life for an enemy? Well, that's what Christ did for us, and that's what He's telling these Jews in our text. The problem is that they don't see themselves as the enemy. They see themselves as sons and daughters, when in fact they are slaves in the household who have no privileges which only a son or daughter possesses in that household.

But as it is they continue to rely on the physical lineage of Abraham to set them free. The dilemma is that a physical lineage doesn't address a spiritual problem. It doesn't mean that the physical lineage of these Jews to Abraham was unimportant. It was very important in the sense that they were a privileged people with wonderful promises from God which were given to Abraham.

But even Abraham understood that the greatest of all the promises which he received from God was the promise that he would be in the presence of God forever. And the reason he would be with God forever was because he believed God and the promises God made regarding the Messiah.

ROM 4:3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

It was Abraham's faith in God's covenantal promises, not his physical status before God, that produced a righteousness which was put to his account. This is what Abraham rejoiced in. And Jesus reminds the Jews in our text that this is the Abraham they need to imitate, both in word and in deed, as they too express faith in the Messiah that Abraham longed to see, and did in fact see.

Wait a minute, you're telling me that Abraham saw the Messiah, which is to say that he saw Jesus? Absolutely. That's exactly what I'm saying. In fact that's exactly what Jesus Himself said.

JOH 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

Here was Jesus, standing in front of these people, right around 32 years old, making the statement that 'Abraham longed to see Me' and Jesus says that 'Abraham actually did see Me.'

Now keep in mind that Jesus and Abraham are separated by about 2,000 years. And so, if Jesus was alive when Abraham was around this would put him at over 2,000 years old which is why the Jews said in JOH 8:57

JOH 8:57 "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

And here was Jesus' response.

JOH 8:58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Jesus has just identified Himself as the eternal God who transcends time. Jesus didn't come into existence at Bethlehem when he was born in a manger. Jesus is eternal because He is the Son of God who was, and is, and is to come.

The difference between the Son of God that Abraham longed to see and did see and embraced by faith, and the Jesus standing in front of these Jews, is simply that the Son of God here in the gospel of John, had left heaven and came into this world as a man to save us from our sin. But He's the same God who has always been. And that's why Jesus could say that Abraham saw Him and trusted Him as Lord and Savior, just as we do today.

And by the way, this claim of Jesus being God who knew Abraham some 2,000 years ago didn't escape the Jews. They knew exactly what Jesus was saying when He called Himself "I am." "Before Abraham was born, I am."

You'll remember that when Moses asked God, who spoke to him from the burning bush, who should I tell Israel sent me to you? God responded to Moses, tell Israel that "I am" sent you.

The name "I am" intimates the one who is self-existent, the eternal one, God Almighty. That's the name Jesus was claiming for Himself which means that Jesus was the One speaking from the burning bush to Moses as well. And this is why the Jews respond in JOH 8:59.

JOH 8:59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

They understood that Jesus was calling Himself God; the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And they believed He was blaspheming God by assuming equality with God. The fact of the matter is He is God. And since only God can forgive sin it makes sense that He can make the statement back in our text.

JOH 8:36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

But of course, the Jews aren't going to humble themselves before Jesus Christ and seek freedom from Him. They continue to hold to their physical lineage as their ace in the hole. But Jesus responds to this attitude.

JOH 8:37-39 I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am

telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Okay, there's a number of things here we need to unpack. The first thing is that Jesus recognizes that they are descendants of Abraham. It's important to establish this fact because this actually puts more responsibility on their shoulders to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

And so, Jesus says, 'yes you do belong to the line of Abraham. The problem with this is that if you are Abraham's descendants and you claim him as your father, both physically and spiritually, then you are doing a very odd thing. You are seeking to kill the One Abraham knew and loved.'

But then Jesus gives the reason they are trying to kill Him. He says, "you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word."

A little better translation of that would be, "because My word has no place in you."

A.W. Pink points out in his commentary on John that the phrase no place, or no room, signifies no entrance. There was no entrance point at which they would allow this word to get into their hearts because their hearts were closed.

And so, despite the fact that they were undoubtedly the seed of Abraham, in one sense, "they certainly were not children of God." (Pink)

God's truth had no place in them. And this doesn't mean they didn't have the truth. They had all of the Scriptures, but Jesus points out that though they have the Scriptures, which lead them to the Messiah, and thus to eternal life, they will not embrace the One these same Scriptures speak of, which is Jesus Himself.

Jesus is saying that if you were children of God, as was Abraham by faith, then you would act like children of God who would not be in the mode of trying to murder the One who has come to give you life. But instead, like Abraham, you would place your faith in Me.

Well, that's not going to happen. These people are hell bent on destroying Jesus, but our Lord continues to love them with the truth.

JOH 8:38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Now, this is where the Jews have got to be scratching their heads as they fume over this statement of Jesus. Keep in mind that the Jews are continually referring to the Father as their God whom they follow according to the Law. Jesus continues to remind them that He is their God sent by the Father whom they should love.

And once again, here in verse 38, Jesus reminds them that He is sent from the Father they claim as their own. But He goes a step further in this statement. Notice that He says that He is telling them the truth that He has seen in the Father's presence.

The Scriptures are very clear that no one can see the full glory of God and live, at least in this world. Moses was one who asked to see God's glory and the Lord accommodated him, but only to a certain extent.

EXO 33:18-20 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

By the way, this does not contradict what Jacob said regarding the time in which he wrestled with God.

GEN 32:30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

You'll remember that Jacob was wrestling with a man.

GEN 32:27-28 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Of course, the reason Jacob could say that he saw God face to face was that he actually saw the man face to face. But he later recognized that the man he wrestled with was no man, but the pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God. In other words, Jacob wrestled with Jesus. But he in no way saw the full glory of God face to face. And Jesus verifies this in John's gospel.

JOH 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

What Jesus is saying here, and in our text, is that no one in this world can see the Father, and yet He has literally seen the Father as He has been in the Father's presence.

Well, if a mere man cannot see the Father and live, and yet Jesus has been in the presence of God in heaven, there's only one explanation for this; Jesus is God who resides with the Father in heaven, who has come to earth by taking on flesh.

And now He has come into this world to give these Jews, and all men, this truth that He is the Messiah who has come from the Father to give life to all who would trust Him as their Lord, God and Messiah.

But you'll notice in verse 38 that Jesus makes a contrast in fathers. On the one hand Jesus is claiming God as His Father, and yet He tells the Jews that they have a different father.

JOH 8:38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Well this doesn't sit well with these Jews. And yet, they don't recognize that Jesus has just told them that the Father in heaven is not their Father. Rather, they are still in the carnal and temporal mode.

JOH 8:39-40 "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. 40 As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.

This is where the talking and the walking come together. The Jews spoke of Abraham as their father and yet they didn't walk as did Abraham who trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior.

In fact, one of the things that characterized most of the life of Abraham, after God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, was a life of faith in God. But what we see in Abraham's faith is that he was willing to follow God wherever He led Abraham.

HEB 11:8-11 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city

with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age - and Sarah herself was barren - was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

We know that Abraham was not perfect. He messed up on a number of occasions and yet it was his faith in God and his willingness to obey God in his faith that assured Abraham that he would have a place with God in heaven.

These Jews were not walking by faith. They said they were identified with Abraham, but it was only from a physical standpoint. The spiritual life of Abraham is something they didn't know.

What this means is that every person who has come to faith in Christ is a spiritual descendant of Abraham. If that person happens to be a Jew then he is both a spiritual and physical descendant of Abraham.

Paul points this out in Romans.

ROM 9:6-8 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

You and I in Christ are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. And so, on one level we are the true Israel as Paul would point out to the Galatians.

Galatians 6:15-16 ¹⁵ For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Those who are the new creation, whether Jew or Gentile, are regarded as the Israel of God.

Well, what does it mean to be a new creation?

^{NAU} **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

If anyone is in Christ, which includes both Jew and Gentile then they are a new creation, and are necessarily identified as the Israel of God.

There is only one true Israel and it comprises all who embrace the faith of Abraham and the promises given to the children of Israel which finds its culmination in one people of God from every generation starting with Adam and Eve who find their hope and peace in the seed of the woman.

^{NAU} **Ephesians 2:15** by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace,

And so, in our text, Jesus is making it clear that not only can they not call Abraham their father, from a spiritual standpoint, they cannot call God their father.

JOH 8:41 You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

Next week when come back to this passage and the one's following it we'll discover that simply existing as a human being does not qualify us as children of God. Often times we hear the expression from the world that we're all God's children.

That simply isn't the case. We are all God's creation, but when we discuss what it means to be a child of God we are talking about a status before God that goes beyond being a creation of the living God.

And what we'll also discover is that in the spiritual realm there are only two fathers, if you will, to whom we can belong. Depending on what father we belong to will determine what works we will be doing, as Jesus is pointing our here as He tells the Jews that they are doing the works of their father.

As we end here may we just ponder that fact. If we claim God as our Father as we have placed our faith in His Son as our only God and Savior, are we doing the works of our Father? Are we loving Him above all? Are we loving others and extending the grace and mercy Jesus is extending to these Jews in our text?

Are we walking in all His ways and being imitators of Christ in the power of His Spirit? Being a Christian is not merely saying we're

Christian, any more than being a Jew was one who simply identified himself with the physical lineage of Abraham.

To do the works of a Christian, as one did the works of Abraham, is to trust and obey the God who called us and Abraham out of our respective places before we knew Him and then walk in the ways God has put forth in His word by faith.

May we be doers of the word all of our days, and may we depend on the One who has given us life to His honor and glory.

PHI 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

COL 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.