

John on Jesus - Freedom from Sin

Sign Title: Freedom from Sin

November 4, 2012

Who has seen the movie *Avengers*? It is very popular. It is in the record books as the all-time top-grossing movie for an opening weekend bringing in more than \$200 million. It passed the previous record by more than \$30 million.¹



Please don't think I am endorsing the movie. I think it is safe to talk about it because most of you have already seen it. In addition, I will teach you how to share the Gospel from this movie. That is why we are talking about it. For those of you who haven't seen the movie, it is the latest cinematic production from Marvel comic book studios. In typical comic book fashion, it is the story of superheroes saving planet Earth from an evil villain. The villain's name is Loki. He comes to Earth through the power of dark energy in a cube. Using his scepter, that has a type of blue laser beam, he reeks havoc on all who oppose him. As the opening scene closes, Loki takes his staff and touches it to the chest of Hawkeye, one of the movie's heroes. Loki's eyes momentarily turn black. When Loki removes the scepter from Hawkeye's chest, he is changed. His body and mark are the same but his will is now in league with the enemy. His will is enslaved to serve evil.

As I watched that scene, I couldn't help but think of how biblical it was. The Bible tells us that each one of us has our hearts taken over. We have a dark force living inside of us. It is called sin. We know the right thing to do but sin

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/07/movies/marvels-the-avengers-top-box-office-record.html?_r=0

inside of us is controlling our will. In one moment, we feel very much in control of ourselves, but under the right circumstances, the dark force of sin grabs control of our lives and we serve it like a slave. Jesus talks about this.

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. John 8:34 (ESV)

In the *Avengers*, the only way to find release from the dark force was called a cognitive recalibration. That simply means somebody hit you in the head really hard. Unfortunately, that doesn’t work to overcome the power of sin. I tried it. After you wake up from knocking yourself out, you discover the power of sin is still there. Is there hope to overcome this dark force of sin inside of us? There is. Thankfully, it doesn’t involve getting hit in the head. Instead, it involves connecting ourselves with our superhero. We are not talking about a superhero of fantasy like in the *Avengers* movie. We are talking about a real life superhero as real as the person sitting next to you. His name is Jesus Christ.

If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. We are working our way through the Gospel of John, and this morning we are at John 8:30. Take out your Bible. If you don’t have a Bible, use the one in the pew in front of you. John 8:30 is found on page 894. While you are turning, here is the background we need to know.

Background

At this point in the book, Jesus is only six months away from the crucifixion. He is in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Last week, in John 8:13, Jesus kicked off quite a debate with the religious leaders when he claimed to be the light of the world. Jesus claimed to be the Pillar of Fire, the

presence of God, that freed ancient Israel from slavery in Egypt. He claimed to be the one that led them through the wilderness and to the Promised Land. That was Jesus in the Old Testament. When Jesus claimed to be the light of the world, he claimed to be the one that would not just lead Israel but would lead all of God's children from all nations. He claimed to not just led people out of not physical slavery and death in this life but slavery to sin and eternal death in the Lake of Fire. He claimed to be the one not just leading ancient Israel to the Promised Land in Egypt but leading all of God's children to the new heaven and the new earth.

As you might expect, those claims touched off a huge debate with the religious leaders in the temple. To give you the cliff notes, Jesus won the debate. He didn't just win by a little; it was a landslide victory. Let's pick up the story in John 8:30.

As he was saying these things, many believed in him. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 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'?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." John 8:30–38 (ESV)

Jesus made another claim to his new disciples about what it meant to be a true disciple. That sparked off another debate. Like last week, we will avoid most of the debate and give our attention to Jesus' claim. What Jesus claimed is to be the one who can free us from the power of the dark force called sin.

Not all disciples are genuine disciples.

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, John 8:31 (ESV)

The first thing we learn is that all disciples of Christ are genuine disciples. We find this throughout the Gospel of John. Many people come to Christ but fall away.

In the Bread of Life discourse, after Jesus had thousands following him because he provided a free lunch, he began explaining that he was the bread of life. He was what they really needed to satisfy themselves, not physical bread. What happened when people discovered Jesus wasn't giving out any more fish and chips?

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. John 6:66 (ESV)

Later in John 12, we find religious leaders placed their faith in Jesus but it was not genuine faith. They were more concerned about what their friends thought of them than about acting as a genuine disciple of Jesus.

Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. John 12:42–43 (ESV)

The grid we use to look at the world is usually two categories of people: Those who follow Christ and those who do not follow Christ. In one sense, that is valid, in another sense, it is false. Jesus gives us three categories:

- 1) Those who don't follow Christ.
- 2) Those who say they are disciples but there is no evidence of it.
- 3) Those who are genuine disciples who abide in Christ's words.

This is nothing new. Jesus talked about the same thing in the parable of the sower in Mark 4. Some hear the word with joy but when tribulation or persecution comes, they fade away. They are the seed that fall among the rocks. Others let the cares of the world choke out God's word. They are too busy with everything else that they can't get to the important part of living as a disciple. That is the seed that fall among the weeds.

John and Jesus didn't say these things to discourage us. They wanted to encourage us to follow Christ with all our hearts and to avoid the pitfalls.

A genuine disciple doesn't just believe in Christ, he/she abides in his Word.

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, John 8:31 (ESV)

Some disciples have a genuine love for Christ. They have a desire to learn more about Jesus and grow closer to Christ. This is the hallmark of genuine discipleship. How do we love Christ's Word today? The Bible tells us the way we know Christ today is through the Bible. This shows up in a willingness to obey Christ's word to us in this book.

Abiding in Christ's word is obeying his word.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? James 2:14 (ESV)

Abiding in Christ's word is loving his word.

True disciples are known as men and women of the Bible. The reason we have a love for the Bible is because it is the way we abide in Christ's Word.

Psalm 119, which is the longest Psalm in the Psalter, is all about the prominence of the word of God in the life of a genuine disciple. Take the time to read all of Psalm 119. Here are a few snapshots.

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11 (ESV)

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Psalm 119:18 (ESV)

My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! Psalm 119:28 (ESV)

Abiding in Christ's word is learning his word.

Another thing we should know is a disciple, by definition, is a learner. Being a disciple means being a learner. It means sitting at the feet of Jesus. It means we continually look to learn from Jesus. This is why we sit under the teaching of the Bible in church. We are disciples of Jesus. We are learning from Jesus. We abide in the Word of Jesus. That is the profile of a true disciple. They have their finger in the book.

This is good for us to hear because it helps us check the genuineness of our faith. We are to let Jesus talk with us through this text corporately and personally.

If there is one particular action step I want each of us to take, I want us to get ourselves back in the book privately. As I read this, I couldn't help think of the Parable of the Soils. In that parable, the weeds choked out the word. The weeds represent the cares, riches and pleasures of this world choking out the word of God in our life making it non-productive. I wrestle with a busy life. Many of you wrestle with the same thing. Corporate worship is easy to schedule;

private time in the word is hard to keep, yet, that is when a true disciple is a learner. It is when they choose to sit under Jesus. We may read the Bible and not understand portions of it while other portions are clear, but we sit under Jesus asking him to teach us a little more each day.

The action step God calls us to take is to schedule regular time in God's Word. Personally, I use a program called [Logos Bible software](#). The program creates a reading plan that gives me a portion of the Old Testament and a portion of the New Testament each day, and it lets me finish the Bible in a year. There are many good pieces of software out there but that is what I use. I recommend it, especially for the generation that doesn't carry much more than a cell phone and a debit card. Don't let the busyness of life choke out the word of Christ in your life. Abide in the Word.

Jesus promises genuine believers will know the truth.

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31–32 (ESV)

If you are like me, while you already have a candidate picked out, you are amazed at the campaign advertisements. Outside of the big-rock issues, it is hard to know the truth about the candidates. While I favor voter guides, they don't tell us all the truth we need to know. The truth we hear is often slanted. The difficulty we have finding the truth shouldn't surprise us.

As God looks at life, there are only two groups of people on the planet.

Jesus tells us there are only two groups of people on the planet.

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.” John 8:42 (ESV)

The first group is those who love Jesus. They recognize Jesus as the Son of God. That is not from themselves. It is a gift from God to recognize the true identity of Jesus. There is only one other group.

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 does not stand in 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. John 8:44 (ESV)

The only other option is that your father is the devil. I know this sounds harsh but the Bible is not trying to be harsh, it is telling us the truth. We live in a world where the devil is in control of hearts. The power of sin is alive and well in everyone. That is the truth.

Some of you will tell me you know plenty of good religious people who live highly moral lives. They believe in God. They pray to God more faithfully than most of us. They don’t think much of Jesus. They are good people. How could their father be the devil?

My friends, look at the audience Jesus is talking with in the temple. He is talking with the highly religious Jews of his day. This was taking place in the temple where people gave their offerings. These were religious people. From our perspective, you can’t get more religious polish than this crowd came with. They were Jews. They were part of God’s chosen people. They were the in-with-God group. Jesus still said their father was the devil. There are only two groups of people on the planet. Those who recognize Jesus for who he is. They rely on his grace and God is their father, and everybody else.

The only standard of truth is God's Word.

Truth about reality is hard to find in this world. Jesus said there is only one place to look for it.

But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. John 8:45 (ESV)

Here is the great promise Jesus gave us. He tells the truth. The one place we can look in this world to find the truth are the words of Jesus. This book tells us the true problem in this world is not political, it is sin. This book tells us we will all stand before Christ for either a judgment of rewards or condemnation. This book tells us about a new heavens and earth for those who are connected by faith to Christ and an eternal lake of fire for everyone else who has the devil as his or her father. This book is our standard of the truth. You could call it the only no-spin zone.

When genuine disciples abide in the word, they learn the truth about themselves and the world around them. Instead of getting our framework for life from Google, we get it from the Word of God which is truth because Jesus cannot lie. We start to learn to measure the truth of everything we hear based on how it compares to the standard measure of truth because we know everything else is a lie.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 (ESV)

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (ESV)

Genuine believers will experience freedom from sin.

"...and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32 (ESV)

Here is the answer to the great question we started with. How do we experience freedom from that force in our lives that controls us and leads us into rebellion against God, the force called sin? According to the truth, there is no such thing as neutrality. The only thing that exists is slavery to sin. Everyone is enslaved to the dark force of sin.

I no longer have to sin.

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:22–25 (NKJV)

Who is the one who delivers us from this slavery to sin? Jesus!

When I am tempted to sin, because Jesus conquered the power of sin, I do not have to sin.

Before, I was a slave to sin. Sin controlled me. Avoiding sin usually meant substituting the pleasure of one sin for another.

While sin no longer reigns, the allure of sin remains.

The power of sin is broken but the allure remains. How is the allure of sin's pleasures broken? That is where abiding in Christ makes a difference.

We are all created as pleasure seekers. Nobody seeks pain. Even in sports, when athletes go through great amounts of pain it is for the greater pleasure of the victory. We live for pleasure. Sin provides pleasure. It is a pleasure that leads to death. Christ not only broke the power of sin, he offers us a greater pleasure than sin. The Bible tells us to set our minds on enjoying the greater pleasure of walking with Christ.

...who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:4–6 (ESV)

When we abide in Christ and set our mind to satisfying ourselves on the pleasures of Christ, the allure of sin fades into the background. Instead of seeking to satisfy ourselves on the pleasures of sin, we are satisfied by a much greater pleasure called Christ and who we are in him.

Conclusion

1. **Everyone who proclaims freedom from Christ finds slavery to sin.**

Everyone who proclaims dependence upon Christ finds freedom from sin. My salvation breaks the power of sin. Abiding in Christ overwhelms the pleasures of sin. The joy of Jesus is greater satisfaction than anything this world can offer.

2. **The devil is the father of all who are not following Jesus.** He fills the world with lies. Jesus comes from God, his words are the standard of truth.
3. **Not all disciples are genuine disciples. Only those who abide in the Word of Christ are following Christ.** Re-attach myself to the Word in learning, joy and obedience.

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for our sins and giving us your righteousness. This text teaches us that we should expect that whenever the truth about Jesus is inserted into a conversation, it will divide. Forgive us of our fear of offending so we don't talk about you. We want to gain the applause of our heavenly father more than our earthly friends. Amen.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching. Feel free to contact him at ktruck@gmail.com or visit his web at www.christ2Rculture.com

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