

John 8:31-47

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 March 2026

Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] John chapter 8. Our text for today is John chapter 8 verses 31 through 47.

! This, the first proclamation of the gospel called the Proto-Evangelion, the promise of one who will come to crush the head of Satan, establishes a thematic line that should be carefully traced all throughout the Old Testament and to our text today.

I can't under-present the emphasis that should be made in thinking in these terms as we read the Bible. A careful reader of the Old Testament will note the conflicts that arise between those who oppose God, metaphorically offspring of the serpent, and those who are shown God's favor, metaphorically offspring of the woman, all of which culminates in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Children, you may have heard him called the Snake Crusher in some of the reading that your parents do with you. This theme should be present on our minds as we look at today's text.

The conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of his day has been growing in John's gospel. In chapter 5, his opponents didn't like him healing on the Sabbath and calling God his Father.

[2:00] They make a plot to kill him at that point. In chapter 6, they didn't like him telling them they would have to eat his flesh and drink his blood to have eternal life.

Last week, we saw in chapter 8 that Jesus tells them that they will die in their sin, that he is the great I Am, that is, God incarnate, and that he is the source of truth on earth, all of which they do not like.

The conflict is white hot where we have arrived in chapter 8. You know where it's headed. It is reaching its high point here.

Jesus' opponents, just like that crafty serpent in the garden, undermined Eve's faith in saying, has God really said our feigning moral superiority while murderous intentions dwell in their hearts?

Jesus has no tolerance for this tactic. Jesus stopped pulling punches at all at this point.

[3:14] He will state in today's text without question that they are offspring of the serpent, bent to his will, set against the one who can set them free.

So you see, when the most important of matters are considered, there are really only two categories of people.

The offspring of the serpent, the offspring of the woman. We're presenting it in a different way as we've been preaching through this text. What are we to do with Jesus?

Are we to accept him as he presents himself, Lord of the universe, the one in which we must believe to be saved, or are we to reject his teaching, call him a liar or a lunatic?

What we do with him determines whether we are offspring of the serpent or offspring of the woman. Which are you?

[4:17] This question deserves the severest of our attention. It's an incredibly important question to ask and to answer.

And I hope we might answer it in the affirmative offspring of the woman born of the son. So let's look together at verses 31 through 47, but let me lead us in prayer before we do.

Father, help us this day as we take up your word. Brief moments we have this morning together.

We want to rightly understand it. We humbly recognize that it was written for your glory and for our good.

And we recognize that we need your spirit to work in our hearts that we might believe its promises and obey its commands and have affection for you, its author.

We pray, Father, our time together will honor and glorify Christ. And we pray this in his name. Amen. I'll begin reading in verse 31.

[5:27] So, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in 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. 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.

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. You are doing the works your father did.

[6:44] They said to him, We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one father, even God. 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. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

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. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin?

If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not.

[7:44] of God. Boy, if they weren't mad at him before, they certainly are now. Two groups, you see.

One free, to put it differently. The other enslaved. Our outline for this morning will center on the freedom that Jesus promises in verse 32.

The first point will be the path to freedom and the second, the pretense of freedom. Number one, the path to freedom.

Verses 31 through 32 and then 35 and 36. First, in order for us to be free, we must believe in Christ. Our text starts, so, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him. This is a response to what?

[8:46] The previous verse. You'll notice verse 30. You look up your page. As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Now, you may recall that John doesn't exclusively use the term the Jews to refer to the religious leaders that opposed Jesus. We talked about that last week, if memory serves me.

But that he does most regularly use the term in this way. This makes it really important for us to ask the question, why this phrase, in this place?

Why does he state it this way? He's most often using this phrase to speak of Jesus' Jewish religious opposition. So, why here?

We see, many believe. So, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed. Certainly, John could have said those who had believed in him, referring back to verse 30, but he doesn't make that choice.

[9:52] In fact, John records what Jesus says, and then the response in the rest of our text, beginning in verse 33, they answered him.

And then John records Jesus' indictment of those who answered him. What are we to do with this? I want to separate them out.

I want to make them two separate groups of people. I want to apply some conjecture that there's different groups standing around as he's teaching in the treasury, in the temple. The text doesn't give us any clues that that's what's happening here at all.

Last week, in speaking of those who will die in their sin, I concluded with hope because of verse 30. But to my shame, I had not gathered the full context of what is happening here.

precursory read it through, but didn't really think what's going on in these verses. Now, I read a slew of explanations this week trying to hang on to the individuals in verses 30 through 32 as genuine believers.

[11:06] believers. But I found them all wanting. Really, don't want to say, I think I got that wrong. I think I misunderstood verse 30, but none of the explanations really held much muster.

If we are faithful to the words presented to us, and yes, even to the original language in which they were written, some of you might be running off on your devices to try to sort it out. You'll be disappointed.

We must conclude that the Jews being addressed have not truly believed. Jesus, as he is God, knows the hearts of men, and he knows these men are fickle just like those encountered previously. Do you recall, this isn't the first time we have seen this issue in John's gospel. I'll take you back to John chapter 6, beginning in verse 60. After Jesus had spoken of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, metaphorically, to be sure, when many of his disciples heard it, disciples, followers of him heard it, they said, this is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, he's aware of it, said to them, do you take offense at this?

[12:42] Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh is no help at all.

The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe.

You see the exact same thing happening in our text today. Those who said they believed, Jesus already knew they did not believe and who it was who would betray him.

And he said, this is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father. After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

What's happened before, I think we're seeing it happen here again. Professions, we believe, and Jesus exposes their unbelief.

[13:51] But all the same, Jesus is presenting the path to freedom. His listeners are hearing it and we're hearing it as well.

If these people who are said to have believed did not believe savingly, then what are we to think of our own belief?

We must believe. We must believe. We must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the God-man sent to live the life demanded of us that we have not lived, to die the death that we deserve because of our sin, to resurrect as a defeat of death that we may have eternal life.

Is saving belief just about getting the gospel equation right? Were the people in our text just missing some bit of detail?

Not at all. Of course, we must believe certain things to be saved. But the biblical idea of belief steps beyond just logging some facts in our minds and acknowledging them as true.

[15:08] This is not the picture of belief. The word, the Greek word, doesn't really even allow for that. The word believe can also be translated trust.

It's a throwing yourself upon the truth you say that you believe. So last week I very briefly talked about the parachute analogy and me and the boys lining up on our couch and jumping off and trying to explain faith to them, what it means to believe in something.

If you're to believe that a parachute will save your life if you were thrown out of a plane, you put it on differently than if you just were on the ground saying, sure, sure, parachutes catch people when they fall.

There's actually some action that follows. I genuinely believe that this will catch me, will save me in the end. Or perhaps an accident is imminent or you're going to crash your car into a brick wall and your seat belt is on and you know that there's an airbag that will deploy and as much as it may hurt when that happens, you believe that it will in fact save you from destruction.

This is the way we grasp hold of the truth of the gospel. We understand our sin and we understand what is bought for us and we know that eternal damnation is just and right.

[16:38] It's what awaits us if we don't turn from our sin and place our faith, our trust in Christ. We must. We must believe.

We must believe in a way that evidences our belief. We take hold of Jesus in that way. We give our very life that we might belong to him.

It's going to work out in the way that we live. We're going to hold on to him not just as our savior but also as our Lord.

All of me. I'll give all of myself to you. We live in an age of cheap grace and decisionism where what it means to be saved is to raise a hand, walk an aisle, sign your name on a card.

Many people have done those things and the Lord has saved them but not because of the things that they did. And then salvation and some perspective is granted to those individuals.

[17:47] No follow up, no discipleship, no meaningful church membership, no effort to watch and be careful, to see what happens when the son of tribulation comes.

Do these people dry up and not produce fruit? Are they actually in Christ? Do they press on in him? Persevere to the very end.

Beloved, good trees produce good fruit. Those of you who may be out of Christ this morning, bad trees produce bad fruit.

Apples don't grow on pear trees, right children? Now you may be thinking that is all well and good.

This kind of active faith. But are those ideas found here in Jesus' words?

Yes, they are. He says to those who believe, profess to believe, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.

[19:02] And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. So we must believe that Jesus is the Christ and we're going to evidence that by obeying his word.

The evidence of belief is an abiding or remaining continuing in Jesus' word. faith. D.A.

Carson said of this text, quote, holding to Jesus' teaching not only establishes the genuineness of faith, it also has its own authenticating power.

We come to know truth not simply by intellectual assessment but by moral commitment. Not only do I see that it's true but I arrange my life according to it.

Judaism, you may not know, taught that the study of the law is what makes a man free. The study of it, not the obedience to it, but the study of it is what makes a man free.

[20:09] Jesus taught that the law serves to point to him. John 14 and verse 6, Jesus there said, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. You may recall John 1 and verse 14, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory is of the only son from the father full of grace and truth.

In John 5 and verse 39, Jesus indicts the Pharisees by saying, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they that bear witness about me.

It's all meant to take us savingly to Jesus Christ, to be set free in him. And having been set free, we are free to follow him.

John 14 and verse 15, Jesus says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. The evidence of your love for me is that you will obey me.

[21:32] John 15 and verse 10, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love. And then verse 14 of the same chapter, you are my friends, if you do what I command you.

We must get this right. So many Christians misunderstand this teaching. We are justified by grace alone, through faith or belief alone, in Christ alone.

I want that to be programmed in your brain. if you've been around here for a while, we have said this again and again and again. We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We are not, we cannot be saved by our works. But saving faith is a faith that works, that evidences, that it's real in it's working.

So what are we to do with our belief? Invited examination. Help me faithfully follow Jesus to the end. I plead with you, help me faithfully follow Jesus to the end.

[22:56] Show me if there's any error in my way. Show me where I'm not being obedient to the word. And thank you for all the times you've done this for me, that I might repent and believe and show that my faith is a

saving faith.

faith. Now we have thought briefly about the path to freedom, but let's look just for a moment at the nature of that freedom.

Hop down just a bit in the text to verses 35 and 36. There Jesus says, 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. Jesus uses an analogy to show us the glory of the freedom found in him.

If we have been justified, it's a courtroom scene, right? Our sin expunged, it's taken away, perfect law keeping given to us by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

[24:07] If this is true of us, we're forgiven. What a wonderful thing. We're counted as righteous. What a wonderful thing, but that's not all.

I think in the past, I've spent too much time on justification, so important, very vital Christian doctrine, I don't want to neglect it in any measure, but if we have been justified, we have been justified for something.

If it doesn't spring into your mind, I've failed you. I want it to start springing into your mind. We've been justified so that we are adopted.

Not so that we might be adopted, but so that we are adopted. God can welcome us back into fellowship with him as sons.

Ladies, you want to be sons. Sons get all of the inheritance. This is Bible language, so just accept it. It's fine. Now, at times, I am, and I hope it presents itself as humble, because they're the translators.

[25:21] I just think, ah, I could have gotten that a little bit better. But here, I want to commend them on their punctuation of these two verses. I think it's just right.

He says, the slave does not remain in the house forever. The son, lower case, the son remains forever. And for those of us in Christ, I think we should find ourselves right there.

Set free from the power of sin, now justified, adopted, a son who remains forever.

And then note who accomplishes that work, right? By grace, through faith, in Christ. So, if the son, capital S, the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Indeed. Really, truly free. Right? Not some flawed facsimile of freedom, a real freedom.

[26:26] Free indeed. If this thought doesn't enliven your mind and warm your heart, then I fear that you have never really felt the weight of your captivity to sin.

Whether former or present captivity to sin, you've never really comprehended what an offense it is to God and how ensnaring it can be.

you have difficulty identifying with Paul at the conclusion of Romans 7 and into 8. And yes, I believe, I believe with fervency that Paul is talking about his present set free from sin state.

Just spiritual. But I am of the flesh sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Now, if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now, it's no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh.

[27:33] For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do! the do right, evil lies close at hand.

For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So that I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. If you have understood the depth of your sin then you rejoice at being free indeed.

[28:53] Truly! Really free from slavery to sin. Charles Wesley wrote in his famous hymn And Can It Be?

This is in your bulletin if you care to see it. Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee. So Jesus presents a pathway to freedom.

When we believe in Christ and so evidence that faith in the way that we live. A second point and we'll move fairly quickly through this.

I think I'll pick up some of this language the next time we're in John together. It builds as the chapter proceeds on. So if this is unsatisfying to you I hope perhaps I'll come back to it.

[30:03] We see secondly the pretense! the pretending or the shamming of freedom the putting on as if it's true when it's not.

Notice verse 33 they answered him to this the truth will set you free they say we are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone how is it that you say you will become free? Now the Israelites have been enslaved by Egypt Syria Babylon Medo Persia Greece Syria and at the time of this exchange by Rome undoubtedly no debate about they were enslaved so they must not have been referring to physical enslavement when they say this but rather spiritual enslavement this is important to note because what is happening here is not a confusion of terms Jesus isn't just talking past them leaving them scratching their head right he's not talking on one level and then on another they fully understand the spiritual nature of what Jesus is saying and yet they're in this debate with him he reinforces I say to you everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin they are talking about the same thing spiritual enslavement you need to be set free we don't need to be set free we're not slaves to sin yes you are

Nathan's summary of it clearly we see what's going on here is the very opposite of a faith that works here Jesus presents people whose normative activity their practice is sin not as sons but as slaves those of us who are in Christ this morning do we still sin yes we do we are like Paul at the end of Romans chapter 7 yes we do but it is not the normative practice we don't love it we're pursuing holiness even as we are frail and still find this battle within for our souls the rest of the chapter if you were to do that you might do it on your page I don't know probably not that compelling but if you did that on your page two columns one you could title slaves or to connect back to my introduction seat of the serpent the second could be titled sons or seat of the woman in the first column we can note that the seat of the serpent number one does not believe the truth does not believe it let me just hop around the text a little bit with you verse 37

Jesus says yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you verse 38 Jesus says I speak of what I have seen with my father and you do what you have heard from your father he's going to elaborate the father of lies you will not hear the truth but you do hear lies verse 39 Abraham is our father they say Jesus said to them if you were Abraham's children you would be doing the works of Abraham the works Abraham did which was what his faith which was counted to him as righteousness he heard God and he believed God and he acted in accordance with that belief verse 40 but you seek to kill me a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God this is not what

[34:16] Abraham did verse 44 you're of your father the devil and your will is to do 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 you're the son of him but because I tell the truth verse 45 you do not believe me verse 46 if I tell the truth why do you not believe me verse 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 the seed of the serpent does not believe!

truth the seed of the serpent the slave does not love God verse 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 on my own accord but he sent me there's no affection in their hearts for the God for Yahweh right Jesus says I am him and he sent me you would love us both and thirdly the seed of the serpent does the work of the serpent of Satan verse 41 you are during the works your father did verse 37 you seek to kill me verse 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 suppress the truth do away with

Jesus as a liar or a lunatic none of you who might be in this column find yourself here are thinking about murdering Jesus Christ but you would rather him not be around you want to do away with him suppress the truth that he speaks treat him as a liar or as a lunatic what would belong in the second column that one labeled son or seed of the woman the opposite of everything in the first the sons of

God believe God's word we seek to align our lives with it because it is good and it is true and it is beautiful we love the God of it the one who authored it and the one to whom it points when we take it up we more clearly see him as he is and desire to honor him as such we want to bring him all the glory that is due him by being about the work he has set us to do setting captives free by the power of the gospel redeeming his people for his glory we want christ exalted it's the great high aim of the christian life and whatever god has called us to do we want christ exalted we want to declare his person and his work here and to the very ends of the earth and so you find yourself in one of those two columns i pray it's the latter of the two the most important of matters when they're considered are two categories the offspring of the serpent the offspring of the woman which are you let's pray those those those