

The Absolute Truth

John 8:20-59

Introduction

Following World War II, there were more than two hundred Frenchmen who returned to Paris suffering from amnesia. They had been prisoners in Japanese prison camps and had suffered through a horrible ordeal of privation and torture. These men had been so psychologically devastated by their imprisonment that they lost the conscious awareness of who they were and where they had come from.

In most cases, their identities were quickly established from Red Cross records or with the help of fellow prisoners. But, after all known efforts were exhausted, there were still thirty two men whose identities seemed impossible to ascertain. There seemed to be no records of them nor anyone who knew anything about them.

The doctors, who were treating these thirty two men, believed that their chances for recovery would be impossible, unless they were connected with their friends and relatives. Someone proposed publishing photographs of the men on the front page of newspapers throughout the country. A date and time would also be given for anyone having information about any of these amnesia victims to come to the Paris Opera House. The plan was accepted. Newspapers all around France published the pictures of these men and gave the date when the Paris Opera House would open its doors for potential reconciliations.

On the assigned day and time, a huge crowd gathered inside the opera house to view these war veterans. Every seat was taken. Then, in a dramatic moment, the first of the amnesia victims walked onto

the stage of the darkened room, stood in the spotlight, and slowly turned completely around so that everyone could get a full view of him. Before the hushed audience, he, as well as the other thirty one who followed, asked the pleading question, “Does anybody out there know who I am?”

Isn’t that *the* primary question of humanity – “Does anybody know who I am?”

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that you and I are unable to really live until we have discovered the answer to that question, “Just who are we anyhow?” Our society is more confused than ever – it has a terrible case of self-imposed amnesia.

In the record by John, chapter 8, Jesus Christ will step to center stage. And, in the most frank, hard hitting expressions ever recorded, He will tell us who we are – and He will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Now Jesus’ answer is a “bad news, good news” answer.

“John, what would you like to hear first?”

“Let’s start with the bad news!”

Bad News – The Truth About Us!

Here is the bad news – the truth about us! With three different expressions, Jesus will tell us who we are.

We are sinners under the sentence of death.

1. First, we are sinners under the sentence of death.

Look at chapter 8, verses 20 and 21.

These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come. He said therefore again to them, "I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

Skip to verse 24.

I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.

Did you catch the three times Jesus pounded into his hearers minds, "You shall die in your sins"?

Verse 21b,

. . . you . . . shall die in your sin . . .

Verse 24a,

. . . you shall die in your sins . . .

Verse 24b,

. . . you shall die in your sins.

There are no punches withheld. Jesus is telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Would you believe that there is a group of people, numbering in the thousands, who believe that they will never physically die? The Communications Center published a quote from Cullen Murphy's article in the *Atlantic*, dated January, 1993. Listen to this,

There is an Arizona-based, self-help group, called CDJ, that claims that, despite evidence to the contrary . . .

I should say!

. . . it is possible for human beings to achieve physical immortality. To do so, one must have experienced something called, "a cellular awakening," which is achieved, not through lifestyle changes or physical drills, but rather through an altered state of mind – one which simply refuses to accept [what they call] "the death program".

"Most people," the co-founder, James Straus, was quoted as saying, "actually encourage each other to die, unconsciously, perhaps. We program each other," he said, "even from a small child, that you have to die some day and we prepare people for the system of death. Most people don't realize that."

The author of this article went on to say,

Judging from material I was sent by the group, CDJ, at least 15,000 people on five different continents have taken a pledge. They have just said, "No," to death. And, last summer, many of them gathered in Arizona to celebrate their physical immortality.

I am sorry! You can celebrate all you want – you happen to be celebrating something that just is not true!

Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27, tells us,

. . . it is appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment

Why?!

Because, according to Romans, chapter 6, verse 23,

. . . the wages of sin is death . . .

We are sinners under the sentence of physical death! That is the absolute truth!

In 1984, the Dallas Mavericks, whom all who were living in the Dallas area were following closely, were playing in a crucial playoff game against the heavily favored Lakers. The game had come down to the last six seconds. It was Dallas' possession. Derek Harper, the point guard, thought his team was ahead by one point. So, when he got the ball, he dribbled the final six seconds off the clock and then, began to jump up and down celebrating their victory.

He celebrated, that is, until his teammates rushed up to him screaming that the game was tied 108 to 108, and he had just thrown away their opportunity to win the game with a final shot. They went into overtime and the Dallas Mavericks lost the game.

Now Derek Harper was celebrating, and would have gone on celebrating, with ecstasy, but someone just came up to him and told him the truth.

Jesus looks at his audience of Jewish leaders, who were, at that moment, celebrating their physical descent from Abraham. They were proud of their position in life and were convinced that they had inherited God's blessing. Then, Jesus says to them, and to us, "Here's the truth – you're sinners and you are under the sentence of death."

It only gets worse friends. Jesus informs us of a second truth about who we are.

We are slaves under the stranglehold of sin.

2. We are slaves under the stranglehold of sin.
Skip ahead to chapter 8, verse 34.

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

Jesus says, “Here’s the absolute truth – truly, truly I say to you, because you’ve committed sin, you now belong to sin. You are not free – you are a slave to your sinful nature.”

Now, just in case you do not think you are sinners, Jesus adds, in verse 37,

I know that you are Abraham’s offspring; yet you seek to kill Me . . .

“And, that’s a sin, by the way.”

Now Christ illustrates His point in verse 35.

And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

Now his illustration does not mean as much to us today, so let me tag on an illustration to His.

As a graduate student, I did a lot of interesting things called “part time jobs”. One of them was to run errands for a rather prosperous commercial real estate firm in North Dallas. One afternoon, after classes, I arrived at the office complex and the president of the company pulled me aside, handed me the keys to his car, and said, “I want you to take this over and have some things done to it at the dealership.”

Now his car was a brand new Mercedes Sports Coup – a hard top convertible, white with blue trim. I had seen an ad for one and the price tag was over a hundred thousand dollars! I slipped, rather gingerly, into the driver’s seat, praying, “Lord, I can’t afford to put one scratch. Please part the traffic and get me back without incident.”

I pulled carefully out of the parking lot and eased onto the parkway. Then I noticed something – as people drove by, they stared at me – covetously. I pulled up to a red light and people on both sides of me looked longingly at the car, then at me. So, I sort of settled back in my seat, fixed the rear view mirror, picked up the car telephone. I could get used to this!

Now, my boss had also asked me to fill the car with gas. So, I was looking for a real busy gas station with a lot of people! I found one, pulled in, and got out. The guy next to me said, “Wow, that is really nice.”

I said, “Thanks.”

“How long you had it?”

“Oh, about ten minutes. It’s not mine, it’s my bosses car.”

He said, “Oh, phhhhh.”

It was fun for a moment, acting as if that belonged to me, or better yet, that I belonged behind the wheel. But the truth was far different from the appearance – I was a hired servant; an errand boy who did not own one shiny inch of that car.

The Jews were walking around proud about their assumption that they would live in the house; that is, they were members of God’s family since they were related to Abraham.

Jesus says to them, “You aren’t spiritual sons, you are slaves to sin. And, just as a slave may live for the moment in the master’s house, he’s not part of the family. He has no right to the family fortune – this isn’t his house! And, if the master wants to, he can sell the slave, fire the slave, imprison the slave, or kick the slave out of the house. A slave isn’t guaranteed a future. Only a ‘son’ has a right to call the house ‘his’.”

And, a son of God cannot be a slave to sin.

Now, notice, in these verses, that Jesus uses a word that is disappearing from the English vocabulary – it is the three letter, “s” word, “sin”. It appears eight times in this passage. “The truth,” Jesus says, “is that humanity is held captive by sin!”

We have replaced the “s” word, today, with a variety of words. In John MacArthur’s book entitled, *The Vanishing Conscience*, he explains that sin, and its accompanying guilt, has become public enemy number one. He writes,

These days, everything wrong with humanity is likely to be explained as an illness, an addiction, a result of some pre-existing disability. What we used to call sin is more easily diagnosed as a whole array of disabilities. All kinds of immorality and evil conduct are now identified as symptoms of this or that disorder.

Modern culture has created a new gospel – man is not a sinner, but a victim.

Author Charles Sykes says that America has become a nation of victims, and whining has become the national anthem.

A man who was shot and paralyzed, while committing a burglary in New York, sued the store owner who shot him. His attorney told a jury that the man was, first of all, a victim of society – driven to crime by economic disadvantages. “Now,” his lawyer said, “he is a victim of the insensitivity of the man who shot him. Because of the store owner’s callous disregard of the thief’s plight as a victim, the criminal will be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He deserves some redress.”

The jury agreed. The store owner paid a large settlement. Several months later, the same man, still in his wheelchair, was arrested while committing another armed robbery.

Then, there was the FBI agent who was fired after he embezzled two thousand dollars. He gambled it away in a single afternoon at a casino. Later, he sued, arguing that his gambling addiction was a disability, so being fired was an act of illegal discrimination. He won the case!

The most outrageous case created the famous, “Twinkie Defense”. A San Francisco city supervisor murdered a fellow supervisor and the Mayor. He then claimed that he murdered the men because he had been eating too much junk food – especially Hostess Twinkies.

This is scary; I eat a Twinkie just about every day!

A jury bought the line and produced a verdict of voluntary manslaughter, rather than murder. They ruled that the junk food resulted in “diminished mental capacity,” which reduced the killer’s guilt. He was out of prison before the Mayor’s term would have been completed.

One author, who is not a believer, has written, “‘Victimism’ has so infected our culture that one might even say the victim has become the very mascot of modern society.”

Do you know why it is such a popular movement? There is no personal guilt. “I am sick,” is much easier to say than, “I have sinned.”

But here is the problem. If you cannot say, “I have sinned – no one else is at fault but me, the sinner,” then you cannot repent. And, if you cannot repent, you do not need a Savior. You have done nothing wrong – it is the fault of someone else.

The apostle John wrote, in I John, chapter 1, verse 9,

If we confess our sins . . .

(not our excuses – our sins)

. . . He then is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus says, “Here’s the absolute truth – you are sinners under the sentence of death; you are slaves under the stranglehold of sin.”

The Jews respond vehemently, in verses 39 through 41a.

They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.”

Now notice their insulting response, in verse 41b.

They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.”

Early on, the Jews had started a rumor that Mary had been unfaithful to Joseph during their engagement. They said that she had been with a Roman soldier, named Panthera, and that Jesus was the result of that fornication.

In other words, the Jewish leaders spitefully, proudly say, “Who do you think You are to tell us about Jewish descent? We know who our ancestors are! In fact, . . .”

Notice the last part of verse 41 again, where they say, “. . . our Father is God Himself!”

Now they have gone too far and, in the strongest expression yet, Jesus informs them, and us, of a third truth about who we are.

We are sons and daughters under the sway of our father Satan.

3. We are sons and daughters under the sway of our Father Satan.

Look at chapter 8, verses 42 and 43.

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I

am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word."

Why? Continue to verses 44 through 47.

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.

This must have sent the religious leaders into shock. Jesus just told them that God was not their father, and, in fact, their father was the devil.

I John, chapter 3, refers to the children of God and the children of the devil. Jesus says, "I want to tell you the truth – and I've got bad news for you – you, and every member of the human race, have been born into the wrong family. That's the bad news. The good news is, there is a way to be reborn into the right family. You've got to change your family name, if you want to live in heaven forever."

W. C. Fields was old, sick, and near death. This vocal unbeliever was confined to a hospital bed. One day his wife, making an unexpected visit to him, found him reading the Bible. "W. C.!" she said, with great surprise, "I can't believe you're reading the Bible. What's gotten into you?"

Fields, shot back, in his cryptic voice, "I'm just looking for loopholes, my dear, . . . looking for loopholes."

The truth is, there are no loopholes. That is the bad news – but, there is good news.

Good News – The Truth About Christ!

The good news is – the truth about Christ!

He is the genuine source of truth.

1. He is the genuine source of truth.
Look at verses 31 and 32a.

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth . . .

The truth – is everything God has ever said or done.

David wrote, in Psalm, chapter 119, verse 142, . . . Thy law is truth.

He also wrote, in verse 75 of that Psalm, . . . Thy judgments are righteous . . .

(or truth).

The manual then, for absolute truth, is the living Word and the written Word of God.

The reason absolute truth no longer exists on the campus of a university; the reason right and wrong is determined by the popular polls; the reason our society is unbelievably confused and is, at this moment, asking, "Does anybody really know who we are?" – is because we have set aside the manual on truth.

The truth begins with Christ! Jesus said, as John, chapter 14, verse 6a, tells us,

I am the way, and the truth, and the life . . .

He is the liberating Savior of captives.

2. The second piece of good news about Jesus is that He is the liberating Savior of captives.

Look at chapter 8, verse 36.

If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

Listen to Paul, in II Timothy, chapter 2, verses 25 and 26, expand this thought.

with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

He also wrote, in I Timothy, chapter 2, verses 3 and 4,

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Mankind needs a Savior; a liberator; a redeemer!
There is only One who can do all of that for us.

That leads me to the next piece of good news – the climactic declaration of Jesus about Himself.

He is the timeless Son of God.

3. Jesus declares that He is the timeless Son of God.

Look at chapter 8, verse 58.

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

Verse 59 tells us that they responded by picking up stones to kill Him. And, by the way, they are still throwing stones at Him today.

Newsweek recently published a large section of lies about Jesus – which always seems to get free press. The article reported on the Jesus Seminar. This is a group of seventy seven biblical scholars who get together once a year to vote on what Jesus really said, what He really did, and whether or not He was who He said He was.

They recently met and voted on the Lord’s prayer. You know it from Matthew, chapter 6, that begins in verse 9,

. . . Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

Well, the only thing they could unanimously agree that Jesus actually prayed, were the words, “Our Father”.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 5/1/1994 by Stephen Davey.

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