

If

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: John 8:24-46

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Recently I have been preaching messages to our congregation at 13th Street from passages of Scripture in the New Testament where our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the preacher. I have been selecting passages in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John where our Lord himself preached. And these studies have been a special blessing to me and I feel like they have been a blessing to our congregation. And one of the messages that I brought recently is from John chapter eight. And I would like for you to get your Bible today and open it with me to the eighth chapter of John and here our Lord is teaching in the temple.

He is surrounded by the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the people there in the temple and the people who frequented the temple of God in Jerusalem. And our Lord Jesus Christ in this message used the word “if,” the little word, two letter word I-F, if. He used it eight or nine times.

And it attracted my attention, not just to make a play on words. That’s not interesting at all just to make a play on words. But rather he emphasized the particular truth with which he was dealing and the unchangeable terms of that truth. If this be so, that’s so, unchangeably so. If this condition exists, this exists, unchangeably so. Now that is what he is doing all the way through this entire chapter, chapter eight.

Now I want you to look at it with me. I’ll give you about seven of the, the Lord willing, if we have the time. The first powerful statement, unchangeable truth is found in John eight verse 24. And here is what our master said. “If you believe not that I am he, you will die in your sins.” That is unchangeable, unchangeable, powerful. “If you believe not that I am he, you will die in your sins.”

Now our Lord is here in the temple surrounded by these Pharisees and Sadducees and people who came to the temple to worship and offer sacrifice. And he had just said this to them back in the preceding verse. He said, “Now, you are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. You are from the...” This is what he said to those people. “You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world.”

What is he saying? He is declaring that he is God. “I am from above. I am not born of the earth. I am not of the earth. I am from above.”

That is what John one says. “In the beginning was the Word.” Christ is called the Word of God. He was in the beginning with God. He was God. All things were made by him and the Word was made flesh. He came from heaven to the earth and entered the womb of a virgin and was born.

Timothy says this. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, seen of the angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Isaiah nine says, “Unto us a child is born and a son is given.” He came from heaven.

And Isaiah 6:14 said, “A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and you call his name Immanuel, God with us.”

So this is what Christ is saying to these people. “You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of the world. I am not of the world. God sent me. I am the Son of God.”

Now he...this is what he said in verse 24, “And if you believe not that I am he, you will die in your sins.”

Did you notice those words “I am, if you believe not that I am, I am”? That’s the name of God.

Moses in Exodus 3:14 says, “Lord,” when the Lord was sending him down into Egypt to deliver Israel. He said, “Lord, when they ask me who sent me, what is his name? What I am going to tell them?”

And the Lord spoke out of the burning bush and said, “Moses, I am that I am. Not I was, I will be, I am, every present, eternal ever present God. I am that I am. Tell them I am has sent you.”

And that’s what Christ is saying here. If you don’t believe that I am... I am from above. I am God. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. I and my Father are one.”

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. If you don’t believe that you will die in your sin. And if you don’t believe that I am he...you notice he put that word...I am he. I am who? Who is he talking about? I am the Messiah. I am the Christ.

Our Lord asked his disciples one day, “Whom do you say that I am? Whom do you say that I am?”

And Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Messiah. Thou art the Son of God.”

“I am he. I am God. I am the Messiah.”

Do you see that? And this is powerful truth now, unchangeable and immutable. These terms can’t be tampered with. “If you do not believe that I am he...” Jesus of Nazareth is

God over all blessed forever. Jesus of Nazareth is Christ the Messiah. The Old Testament and Messiah, the only mediator between God and men. And if you don't believe that you will die in your sins. You will die under the guilt of your sins and you will die and meet God in judgment for your sins.

There is a vast difference in dying in Christ and dying in sin, a wide, wide difference. "If you believe not that I am he, you will die in your sins." It can't be changed.

If.

The second powerful statement is found in verse 31. He said, "Now, if you continue in my word, if you continue in my word then are you my disciples indeed and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free if you continue in my word."

Now in verse 30 as he spake these words I am he, as he spake these words it says concerning who he is, "many of the people believed him." They believed him. They believed and professed to believe that he is the Christ.

"Is not this the Christ?" Many of them believed.

And then he said to them...now listen. He declared to those people who believed on him, he said this. He said, "If you continue in my words then are you my disciples indeed. This will be the proof, this will be the evidence that you do indeed believe. This will be the proof. This will be the evidence that you are truly my disciple if you continue in the gospel and be not moved away, if you continue in the faith and do not depart, if you continue in the gospel, then you are indeed my disciple."

You see, to continue in my Word is to live and die in faith. It is to abide in Christ and Christ abides in us. It is to continue to hold fast to our profession and not be moved away from him.

You know, Paul said about his friend Demas he said, "Demas, Demas left me. Demas departed having loved this present world. He departed."

And then John said this. He said, John said, "They went out from us. People left the gospel. They professed the gospel and they walked with us a while and then they quit and they went out from us. But," John says, "They weren't of us. They weren't of us. For if they had indeed truly been of us..."

That is what our Lord said, "If you continue, if you continue in the gospel, continue in Christ, abide in him, his Word abides in you, then in thee you are my disciple indeed, not just in profession, not just on a church roll, not just put on, play like. You are indeed my disciple."

Now perseverance in faith and the gospel is not a condition of salvation. It is evidence of it. A man is not saved because he continues. He continues because he is saved.

My wife and I were sitting in a restaurant today and a little four year old girl came skipping by, pretty little blond headed girl about four years old and she was just swinging her arms and smiling and skipping. I said, "Look how happy she is." And my wife said, "When you skip, that's a sign you're happy. When a child is skipping it is a happy child."

But I want to tell you something. Skipping didn't make her happy. Happy made her skip. Do you see what I am saying? Skipping didn't make her happy. She is skipping because she is happy. And continuing in Christ didn't save me. See, if I am in Christ I will continue. That's right. If I am... That is what Paul says in Hebrews 10. "The just shall live by faith." He will live by faith. He will continue to live by faith and he will die in faith if he is one of God's people.

"But if any man draw back," and some do, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." But Paul said, "We are not of them that draw back." Are we? Are we?

You know, the grace of God changes a person, makes him a new creature, gives him a new heart, a new nature, a new attitude, a new walk, new companions, new family, a new direction, new goals, new...everything is new.

Somebody said one time that true faith, if a man has true faith in God it shows in his eyes. If a man has true faith in God it lights up his countenance. If he has true faith in God it softens his touch. He is gentle. He is a gentle person. If he has true faith it mellows his voice. If he has true faith it will bow his head. It will bend his knee. It will open his hand in generosity. It will curb his tongue. It will humble his heart. It will order his steps. It will teach his mind. It will give him peace. It will teach him forgive.

That's right. She is skipping because she is happy. She is not happy because she is skipping.

And he is continuing in faith because he is a believer. He is not a believer because he is continuing. But that is an evidence that he is a believer. He continues and he is a believer. He continues to believe.

Here is the third statement, John 8:36, awesome, unchangeable statement. He said, "If the Son of God makes you free, you will be free indeed. Truthfully, eternally, forever free.

Now what led him to say that? Well, back in verse 32 he said this. "My disciples continue in my word which is the truth and the truth makes them free. And those Pharisees when he said that, they said, "Why, we are Abraham's seed, we are not in bondage. What do you mean free? We don't need to be set free? We have never been in bondage to any man."

Our Lord declared, "Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin."

That's right. Whosoever commits sin is in bondage to sin. He is in bondage to the law. He is in bondage to justice. He is under the curse of the law. If you have ever committed one sin in our life...

You say, "Preacher, you are being facetious. We have committed many."

I said just one. To offend in one point is to be guilty of the whole law. But if you ever sinned you are a slave of sin. You are in bondage to sin. When, when it is finished brings forth death. That is the end of sin. And that will be your end unless those sins are put away. The soul that sinneth, it will surely die.

The soul, now. I am not talking about the die. It is going to die anyhow and you know that, but the soul that sinneth it will surely, surely, surely die, just one sin.

Be sure your sins will find you out. That is when he said, "But if the Son, the Son of God, the Messiah who came to set the captive free," that is what he said. "The Spirit of God is upon me. He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to set the captive free, to set at liberty them that are bruised and bound, to give sight to the blind." If he makes you free, you are free indeed.

Free from what? Free from what? All right. Listen. Free from sin. All sin. He said, "I will cast your sins to the depths of the sea. I will remember them no more. I will separate them from you as far as the East is from the West." He bore our sins in his body and put them away.

Free from what? From the curse. Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But Christ was made a curse for us and redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Free. Free from sin. Free from the curse. Free from the captivity of Satan. Do you know that people are led captive by Satan, by his will? That's right. Captive by the will of Satan. Christ sets the captive free. Free from the ceremonial law. Do you...you that would be under the law, don't you hear the law? Don't you hear what the law requires? You don't want to be under a ceremonial law, the law of circumcision and ceremony and priesthood and sacrifices and all these laws. He freed us from the law. He didn't come to destroy the law. He came to fulfill it. And on our behalf and in our stead and for our righteousness he has fulfilled all the law. We are free. If the Son makes you free, you will be free from sin, from the curse, from the captivity of Satan, from the ceremonial law and from condemnation. There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus our Lord. Free from all condemnation.

All right. The fourth powerful statement, powerful statement written down here in verse 39. John eight verse 39. He says, "If you were Abraham's children..." They said that awhile ago. "We be Abraham's children."

“If you were, if you really were the children of Abraham you would do the works of Abraham.”

These men were quick to inform our Lord of the fact that they were the descendents of Abraham. They were proud of that act and they wanted the Lord to understand that. He knew that. He said, “I know you are Abraham’s descendants. I know that. God called Abraham my friend, my friend.” And these people were bragging about the fact that the friend of God was their friend. But they weren’t particularly the friend of God, but they were the friend of Abraham who was the friend of God. And that’s what people are doing today. What they are doing today, they are going back there and living on the names of these old forefathers like Calvin and Zwingli and Huss and Luther and John Owens and John Knox and the Spurgeons and the Bunyans and the Wesleys. And we are talking about these are our forefathers. They started our denomination. And we are therefore their children.

Well, our Lord looked at these people and this is what he said. They said, “Abraham is our father. We are the children of Abraham.”

He said, “If you were the children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham. You would walk like him and talk like him. And you would do the works of Abraham.”

Have you ever studied the works of Abraham? The Jews talk about Abraham having seven, eight or nine or 10 trials, severe trials through which God put him and proved him. And these are awesome. You remember he left his home when he was 75 years old when he left his home and family and went to the land of which God spoke about to him. He left believing God. And then he dwelt in tents all his life. He never owned any property. God promised it to him and to his seed. But he never entered into that possession of that promise. He lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob. He gave Lot the best land. And then he refused to be made rich by the kings of Sodom and the pagan kings. And then he sent away his beloved first son by Hagar, the slave girl. He kicked him out. He had to. God told him to send him away. He said, “The child of promise cannot live with the child of flesh. Can’t do it.” And then he sacrificed Isaac on the mountain and many more trials and works of Abraham, but I can’t duplicate these. What is our Lord saying to me and to you?

If you were the children of Abraham you would do the works of Abraham. I can’t match this. I wouldn’t even want to try. But I believe what our Lord is referring to here is the chief work of Abraham. Do you know what it was? Abraham believed God. That’s what it says about him all the way through the Scriptures. This is what made Abraham different. This is what brought God’s mercies and blessings upon Abraham. This is the foundation for all that he did, all for which he hoped. This is the reason for all that he did, for all that he was and all that he is. He believed God. He believed God. He believed God was able to perform all that he promised. He did not...he did not entertain a doubt against hope. He believed God. And that’s the work of God. And that’s the work of Abraham to believe God. And that is what Christ is saying to these Pharisees.

“If Abraham was your father and if you are the children of Abraham you would believe as Abraham did. You seek to kill me. Abraham didn’t do that. Abraham saw my day and was glad. He rejoiced. Abraham believed in me. And if you were the children of Abraham, you would, too.”

They asked the Lord one time, said, “What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Now tell us. What shall we do that we might work the works of God?”

The Lord Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom God hath sent.”

So there you have it. There you have it. This is the work of God.

And then here is the fifth statement, the fifth statement, very powerful. It is found here in verse 42. Jesus said to them, Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me.”

I know, I know that the...people out yonder in this world, this is their general, general doctrine and theology. “God loves everybody and God is the Father of all men. We are all the children of God, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” That is an accepted rule of this day.

But our Lord didn’t say that. He said to these men, “If God were your Father you would love me.” Why did he say that to them?

Well, they said this to him in the previous verse, verse 41. They said to Christ, “We are not born of fornication. We are not born in sin. We have one father. God is our Father.”

Now here are these religious fellows are standing, looking at the Son of God and they are telling him, “God is our Father.” Do you understand that? “God is our Father because God is the Father of all men.”

And Christ replied, “If God were your Father you would love me.” That is what he said. “If God were your Father. He is not. If he were you would love me. If you were born of God you would love God and you would love his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And you would love his people.”

Listen to the Bible. Listen to the Word now. 1 John 2:29. “Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of God. They are God’s children and they do righteousness because they are God’s children.”

1 John 4:7. “Everyone that loveth is born of God. And he that loveth God loveth him that his begotten of God. And he that loveth not knoweth not God. He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, he is born of God.”

Now I have three sons. One is dead, killed in Vietnam. I have two other sons. They are my sons. They were formed of me. They are nobody else's sons. They are my sons. I don't have any other sons, but those three sons. But they are my sons because they were begotten of me. And if you love God and are born of God you are a son of God. And if you are not born of God you are not a son of God. You are a son of Adam, but you are not a son of God. Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And Christ said, "If you were God's children and God were your Father, you would love me. You would love me for two reasons."

Look at this verse now, verse 42. "Because I proceeded forth and I came from God. That's why you love me. I and my Father are one. If I and my Father are one, how can you love him and not love me?" Come on, now. I am the only begotten son of the Father. Can you love him and not love me? He that has seen me has seen God. Can you love God and not love me, the only manifestation of God you have ever seen? He is the express, exact image of God. How can you love God and not love Christ? It is impossible, impossible.

"If God were your Father you would love me," Christ said, "because I and my Father are one. I came from God. I am the only begotten Son of God."

And secondly he said, "Neither came I into this world of myself. He sent me. For God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son. He sent me into this world. How can you love God, believe God, worship God, revere God and trust God if you don't love and revere him whom God sent, his own Son? If God were your Father you would love the Lord Jesus Christ."

And the sixth powerful statement is in verse 46. "If I speak the truth, why don't you believe me? Why don't you believe me? Which of you can find any fault in me, any sin in me?"

Oh, they all spoke highly of him. Nicodemus said, "We know you are come from God. No man could do these miracles except God be with him."

Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man."

One of the Pharisees said, "Master, we know you are true and you teach the true way of God and you regard not the person of men."

He said, "Well, why don't you believe me?"

Isn't that the opinion of people today? Jesus Christ is holy. Jesus Christ is a prophet. Jesus Christ came from God. Jesus Christ did no sin, the only man who ever lived without sin. Jesus Christ preaches the truth and here comes a question. If he speaks the truth why don't you believe him? Why don't you ... right now, why don't you believe him?

Here comes the answer. He said, "I speak the truth. I came from God. Why don't you believe me?" He said, "I'll tell you. He that is of God hears God's Word. You hear them not." This is an awful charge, awful. "You hear them not because you are not of God."

That's a terrible charge, isn't it? But if he speaks the truth why don't you believe it? Well, he tells you. You are not of God. If you were of God you would believe God's Word.

They asked him one time. They said, "Well, if you be the Christ tell us plainly."

He said, "I told you. You didn't believe me. You didn't believe me because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. They believe me."

If...that is the title of this message. I-F. If...if you want it...if you want it write for it. We'll send it to you. Until next week. God bless you.